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THE SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY

TO

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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THE

SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY

TO THE

HOLY SPIRIT.

BY

JAMES MORGAN, D.D.,

BELFAST.

EDINBURGH :

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

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TO THE
Ministers of the General Assembly
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND,
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED
BY THEIR BROTHER AND FELLOW-LABOURER,
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.



WHEN I entered upon my ministry in Belfast, thirty-seven years ago, the principal religious question of the day was the deity of Christ. The controversy on this and kindred subjects was general and keen. It occurred to me, in the midst of this excitement, to deliver a series of discourses on the Scripture-testimony to our blessed Lord, somewhat on the plan of Dr. Pye Smith's well-known work on the same subject. My purpose was to follow the history of the Divine Word, and investigate its discoveries from book to book, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, until we ascertained what its teachings were on the absorbing question of the times. The discourses were not controversial, but explanatory, practical, and textual. My aim was simply to place before my congregation what the Word of God said respecting the Messiah of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ of the New. I had not proceeded far until I was waited on by some of my hearers, and requested to give them my sermon weekly that they might have it printed and circulated. This I declined to do, because I wished to avoid everything that might lead to public discussions, and because I did not see the probable issue of my labours so clearly as to justify me in taking upon me so serious an engagement. The discourses, however, were continued from week to week. They succeeded to sustain the interest of those who heard them. There were constant testimonies to the satisfaction given by them to many earnest and sincere inquirers. Without controversy, the great doctrines of the Gospel on the subjects discussed were permanently settled in their convictions. We have been reaping the fruits in great

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harmony of views and feelings from that time to the present. Between two and three years our Sabbath mornings were thus spent in inquiring, "What saith the Lord" touching the person and work of the Redeemer of man; and we ended in the undoubted conclusion that He is "God manifest in the flesh," and that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

As soon as this series of discourses ended, the thought came strongly into my mind, that I should next pursue a similar inquiry into the Scripture-testimony to the Holy Spirit. It was begun and carried forward in the same way as the former. I expected it to be much more brief, but it proved to be more extensive. It occupied the Sabbath mornings of nearly three years. When it was completed, the notes, carefully prepared from week to week, were laid aside, and for more than a quarter of a century I did not look into them. At length circumstances arose to excite special attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. I remembered my early labours in that field, and returned to examine what had been their fruit. I was somewhat stimulated by an anxious desire, expressed by old friends, that I would give them what I had preached respecting the Holy Spirit in some permanent form.

This was the origin of the present work. I hesitated, at the outset, whether I should prepare a work, embracing all the passages of Scripture comprehended in the original discourses, or condense them into a smaller number. I resolved upon the latter course and have completed it, although I am yet in doubt whether the former would not have been better. The multitude of the passages deterred me, but the remarks upon them might have been brief. However, I abandoned that idea, and reduced the number of topics by a half, only with this compensation that I united parallel texts which had before been considered separately, and treated them together. The present volume is the result of this arrangement.*

May I be allowed to say a word in vindication of treating this subject of the Holy Spirit in a way which, so far as I know, has not been attempted before? All are acquainted

* A list of the texts and subjects considered in the first series of discourses is given in an Appendix to the present volume.

with the great and noble work of Owen on the Spirit. There are, besides, many volumes in which some departments of the subject are well handled. But it seemed to me that a more excellent way was to pursue the course of the Scriptures throughout, and let them be the exponents of the Spirit Himself and of His work. There might be an objection that the same topics would thus occur again and again and lead into many repetitions. There is force in this remark, but if the inspired Word gives us line upon line, there is reason for it, and we may need the repetitions. I have not been very careful to avoid them. I have been satisfied to urge the same views more than once when they came up in new connections, and might be enforced by fresh considerations.

There is peculiar necessity for the reiteration of the subject of the Holy Spirit. We are prone to neglect it. It has occupied comparatively a small place in the public teachings of the ministry, and the effect has been a corresponding one in the private exercises of the members of the Church. To how many might the question be addressed—"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" And is there not reason to fear that the answer of not a few might be—"We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." It is a thought to be cherished, that however the Spirit may be overlooked in the writings or discourses, or conversations, or prayers, or meditations of men, His doctrine pervades the whole Word of God. We cannot err in giving to it the prominence which it holds in the inspired volume.

Ever since my attention was directed to it in the way that has been told, I have cherished a desire to supply what seemed to be a want in our religious literature. Not that I consider myself to have attained to this desire. Far from it. I have satisfaction in only one thing, that I have suggested a way in which this great subject might be more profitably investigated than has hitherto been done. Let it be viewed simply in the light of God's own Word. Let all its teachings be collected and considered. If my labours be any contribution to this work, I am thankful. No doubt, many passages in both the Old and New Testaments have been overlooked by me that ought to have been brought forth and held up prominently to view. But I was constantly warned by the endless recurrence

of fitting texts, and despaired of overtaking them. I found rest only in the thought that no more could be done by me than to make selections which others might increase indefinitely. It will be a high gratification if I shall find that what I have attempted has been the means of leading others to enter upon the same course and pursue it more extensively and successfully.

I cannot conclude without asking the indulgence of my readers for the plain, and practical, and unadorned, and unlearned character of my work. I did not seek, as I was sensible I was not competent, to attain to the great things of scholarship. No thought of such things was in my mind while I prosecuted my labours. I thought of souls and of their salvation. I thought of the Spirit and how much sinners needed His grace. I thought of Jesus and of His glory which the Spirit alone could promote in the earth. I thought of judgment and eternity, and of what God would have me to do in prospect of them. I longed to honour the Spirit of Christ. I could not withhold the testimony which I felt myself called upon to bear to Him. And I ask no more than that it shall be said of me—"He hath done what he could." However men may judge of my book I glory in the thought, that, before my lengthened ministry has closed, I have been privileged to prepare what may remain when my life and labours on the earth are ended—THE SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

J. M.

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Part I.

THE TESTIMONY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ;

OR,

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT
IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

I.

The Work of the Spirit in the Creation of the World.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—GEN. i. 2.

"By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens."—JOB xxvi. 13.

"Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth."—PSALM civ. 30.



THESE passages are brought together, because they refer to one subject, the work of the Spirit in the creation of the world. It is important to notice what is peculiar in each as reflecting light on the honour rendered to the Spirit in the word of God. The first occurs in the very opening of the volume of revelation, and a part is assigned to Him in the magnificent work of ushering the world into existence. In the second, His hand is recognised, not only in the earth beneath, but in the heavens above, and their glory is ascribed to His handy-work. And in the third we are taught that as creation began with Him, so it is maintained by Him. The whole, therefore, of the Spirit's part in the work of creation is thus at once brought under our consideration. Not that these three texts include all that is taught on the subject. In other passages there are many fresh and varied representations. But these constitute a summary sufficiently comprehensive for our purpose, and may serve as a specimen of the manner in which we must endeavour to classify the testimonies of the Scriptures to the Spirit of God, since it is not possible to consider them apart within the limits to which we are restricted.

Pursuing the course suggested by them, both separately and unitedly, we shall notice—1. The name—"the Spirit." 2. The place assigned to Him—"the Spirit of God," "His Spirit," "thy Spirit." And, 3. The work ascribed to Him—"Moved on the face of the waters," "garnished the heavens," and "reneweth the

face of the earth." By thus considering the work of the Spirit in the material creation we may learn much of His higher and better work in the creation of sinners unto righteousness in Christ Jesus.

I. His name is "the Spirit." It is given to Him specially though not exclusively. Thus it is applied to the Godhead by our Lord, when He says, "God is a Spirit." And it is important to observe that the term is so used to convey to us the most precise and exalted idea of Deity which we are capable of receiving. In opposition to man, dwelling in a frail body, God is represented as spiritual and immaterial. The words of Bishop Hall are just and striking—"without quality good, great without quantity, everlasting without time, present everywhere without place, containing all things without extent." Now all these ideas of excellence may be entertained of the Spirit, in common with the Godhead, but there must be some reasons why He is specially denominated "the Spirit" in contrast to the other persons in the Godhead, and it is not presumptuous to inquire into them.

The term means air or breath. As therefore we associate with it the idea of life, which exists wherever it is, and ceases wherever it is withdrawn, so the name seems to be given specially to the Spirit, as the originator and preserver of life, both bodily and mental, material and spiritual. It is written in one of the Psalms, "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." There is here a distinct recognition of the three persons of the Godhead in creation, "the word, the Lord, and the breath of his mouth." But while they all concur and engage in it, there is peculiar emphasis given to the Spirit—"All the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

May we not find an interpretation of this passage in the conduct of our Lord, when, visiting His disciples after His resurrection, we are informed, "He breathed on them, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost?" He gave them to understand that His breath was the emblem of the Spirit, and also that in imparting to them His blessing He did so by giving them the Spirit. In like manner when the Godhead created the world it was by the immediate agency of the Spirit. And hence there is a peculiar propriety in designating Him by a term that is expressive of life.

Perhaps, also, it may be proper to add,—there seems to be a reference not merely to the fact that the Spirit is the giver of life, but to the manner of His operation in conferring it. This thought is suggested by the saying of our Lord when He discoursed with Nicodemus of the new birth—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." While He makes the wind the emblem of the Spirit, He cites the inexplicable course of the wind as illustrative of the sovereignty of the Lord the Spirit. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." In imparting life to the body and the soul, the conduct of the Spirit is alike beyond human apprehension. Blessed be God, however, the fact is abundantly plain, although we may be unable to explain the manner of it. The Spirit is the Giver of life. He begins it and maintains it. He imparts natural life to the body, reasonable life to the mind, and spiritual life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. To convey this idea more forcibly and vividly to our minds He is designated by a name that implies and suggests it.

We should be deeply thankful to know there is one person in the Godhead to whom it peculiarly belongs to be the Giver of life. This is the great blessing which we should most earnestly desire as we most urgently need it, and this is the all-sufficient provision to secure it—a source infinite and inexhaustible, even the Spirit of the living God.

II. Not only, however, is a distinctive name given to the Spirit. Let it be observed in the second place that a distinctive place is assigned to Him in the Godhead, implied in the phrase, "the Spirit of God." The phrase itself is suggestive. It is sufficient to originate an inquiry in thoughtful minds whether it does not point to something peculiar, to some distinction or plurality in the divine unity. Without dwelling on this suggestion, however, we shall cite a passage from the divine Word, so plain and full in its testimony that he who runs may read. It is in 1 Cor. ii. 9-14, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath

prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." It is impossible fairly to interpret these words and not admit that they discover to us a distinction in the persons of the Godhead.

God is said to reveal to us certain privileges, and this He does "by His Spirit," so that the Spirit is an agent employed by Him.

More explicitly it is testified of this Spirit, that "he searcheth the deep things of God," so that as a distinct person He is engaged in contemplating the divine character and conduct.

Then, as if to place this view of the subject beyond all doubt, an illustration is offered which all may apprehend. As "no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him, so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." No one will say that "the spirit of a man" is the man. It is an essential part of the man, but it does not constitute him. The apostle Paul speaks of "soul, body, and spirit," and prays that these all may be sanctified. There is the body, composed of flesh and blood ; there is the spirit, which imparts vitality to the body, and which man possesses in common with the inferior animals ; and there is the soul, the reasonable, thinking, accountable, and immortal principle by which he is distinguished from them and elevated above them. Yet while these obvious distinctions exist in the being of man, we do not imagine they are inconsistent with his unity. With all this plurality he is one man. Now in the passage before us this very distinction in the constitution of man is quoted as illustrative of some similar distinction in God—a distinction which is real, yet does not interfere with the divine unity, so that the Spirit of God has a distinct place in the Godhead.

This is satisfactory as to the discovery of the great fact, but it is no less important to notice that to this distinct person in the Godhead is assigned a distinct office. As He knows the things of God, being omniscient, and searcheth them, being able to apprehend them in all their connections and purposes, so He reveals them to us. No other being could do so. It is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into

the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." No human discernment could perceive them, nor inquiry discover them, nor observation and experience find them out. These are the great realities of the Gospel of Christ, the way of salvation by Him, with its present privileges and its future blessedness. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." They are published in His Word. But this is not all that is meant by the revelation of them. They are there, and all might see and enjoy them. But alas! the human mind is blind and does not perceive their excellence and beauty. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Spirit must not merely publish them in the book of inspiration, but open the mind to apprehend them. He must give two revelations, the one objective and the other subjective. He must declare the truth as an object to be contemplated, and He must enlighten the mind as the subject which is engaged with it. And this is what the apostle here says the Spirit had done for the disciples at Corinth. He had revealed to them those glorious truths and high privileges involved in them which no eye, unopened by Him, had ever seen; no ear, unstopped by Him, had ever heard; and no heart, untouched by Him, had ever conceived. The apostle treats of the present privileges of believers as well as of their future prospects. And his design in revealing the great fact of the distinct place assigned to the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, is not merely to acquaint us with the truth, but to make known to us the gracious office which He has undertaken, to instruct us in the knowledge of God and the high privileges He has conferred upon us. This honour will appear more fully while we consider—

III. The work ascribed to the Spirit in the text: "He moved upon the face of the waters;" "garnished the heavens;" and "reneweth the face of the earth."

In all these passages the work assigned to the operation of the Spirit in creation, is peculiar and distinct. Creation is ascribed to God, to the Godhead, but a special operation to the Spirit in that work. Let the passages be separately noticed.

In the first it is said, "God created the heaven and the earth."

The term rendered God is plural in its form, and suggests that the work spoken of was performed by the united agency of the persons in the Godhead. The condition of the created world is also distinctly stated: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The meaning seems to be, that at the first creation, the matter of which future worlds was to be composed, was called into being, but allowed to remain in a state of chaotic darkness. How long it continued so, and through what changes it passed, or what may have happened in it we are not informed. But when the time came that the world was to assume its present form, and the life of man to begin on earth, then a special work was performed by the Spirit, which is thus described, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." It is this work which is described in detail in the sequel of the first chapter of Genesis. The rude chaos was reduced to order. Light was caused to spring out of the darkness. The heavens were elevated to the firmament which is above us. The earth was divided into the sea and dry land. The land was clothed with the herb of the field and the trees of the forest. The heavens were adorned with the sun, and the moon, and the stars, which should be "for signs, and seasons, and days, and years." The air was occupied by the winged fowl, and the sea with living creatures. All this work appears to be ascribed to the Spirit, and is included in the statement that "He moved upon the face of the waters." For there is a force in the term "moved" not to be overlooked. It is that which is applied to the bird brooding on her nest, imparting heat and vitality to her eggs, and in due time giving birth to a numerous offspring. Such is the special work here ascribed to the Spirit of God in the creation of the world.

Between this view and that which is presented in the second passage there is a beautiful accordance—"By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." As He did on the earth beneath, reducing the chaos to order and beauty, so also did He in the heavens above. His work was the same in both. (Job xxvi. 13, 14; xxxviii. 31-37.)

And so also in the third passage, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." As the Spirit began at the first, so He continues. Year after year He clothes the earth in beautiful garments, and continually

He supplies it with the living creatures that abound on its surface, or dwell in its depths. (Ps. cxlvii 15-18.)

Throughout the history of creation there are thus four things which appear to have been specially committed to the Spirit; to perfect it, reduce it to order and beauty, endow it with life, and preserve it. He perfected it. Matter having been created in the beginning, He applied it to its purpose in time. He gave it order and beauty, disposing all the parts of the universe in their proper place, and fitting them for the ends they were designed to serve. He imparted life, causing "the herb and the tree to yield fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself," and the living creatures to propagate their species. And He preserves all—watching over the creation which has been committed to His care.

It may be added to this view of the special work assigned to the Spirit in creation, that there is a singular change in the history when the account of man's creation is introduced. What had previously been done comes under the statement that "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." But when man was to be formed the narrative is, "God said, Let us make man in our image." In this work the Godhead was deeply concerned. The contrast brings out more forcibly the special work which the Spirit had performed, and to which we have already sufficiently adverted.

There is now one use of the work which it is alike our duty and privilege to consider before concluding this subject. The special work of the Spirit in creation is in harmony with His work in grace. This principle is distinctly recognized by the apostle Paul, when he says to the Corinthians, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the old creation He did so, as we have seen, by the Spirit, and in the new creation it is the same. The parallel between the two works of the Spirit holds extensively.

He perfected the creation, and He perfects redemption. To Him it belongs to apply to the soul the work of Jesus. Of His work Jesus said on the cross, "it is finished," and that work the Spirit takes, applies it to the heart with power, and so makes it effectual for salvation. (John xvi. 14.)

He reduced the chaos to order, and so He does in every mind into which He enters. He gives light to the understanding and directs it. He places the fitting objects before the affections and engages them. He discovers to the conscience the authority to which it is subject, and makes the will submissive. The man is put into his proper place, and his powers are engaged in their right functions and exercises. He imparted life of old, and He is the Spirit of life to the soul, "dead in trespasses and sins." He opens the blind eyes to see God in His works. He unstops the deaf ear to hear Him in His word. He unlooses the dumb tongue to speak to Him in prayer, and for Him to men. He makes the man "alive to God."

He preserves alike His own work in nature and in grace. He dwells in the soul which He has created anew, and "saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." He revives His work in the heart, which is prone to languish, using the word and ordinances, as well as seasonable providences. He raises up a seed to serve the Lord from generation to generation, and never leaves Himself without this witness to His power and love. And He furnishes the Church and the world with a faithful ministration of the Gospel, "giving apostles, and prophets, and pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Then and not till then shall the gracious work of the Spirit be accomplished on the earth, in both the old creation and the new.

It is a blessed thought that He still exercises His office in both. He thus makes the one contribute to the other and employs them to be subservient in advancing the interests of each other. He so disposes what relates to this world that it serves the edification of His people, and ripens them for the next. At the same time, while they thus grow in grace themselves, they become better qualified to improve the condition of the earth which they inhabit. Nature and grace conspire to the one end, the perfection of the work of God on the earth. And that consummation will be gained when He that sitteth upon the throne shall proclaim, "Behold, I make all things new," that renewal being secured under the "ministration of the Spirit."

In conclusion, may we not properly address to ourselves the question which Paul proposed to the Corinthians, "have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" We profess to believe the gospel of Christ. All who really do so, "receive the Holy Ghost." It is a vain faith through which He does not enter into the mind and dwell there. Let us consider that we are thus addressed, "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore," &c., (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

II.

The Creation of the Soul of Man and the Gifts conferred upon it by the Spirit.

"The Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." GEN. ii. 7.

"I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge." EXODUS xxxi. 3.

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel." JUDGES iii. 10.

"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." JOB xxxii. 8.

"The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." JOB xxxiii. 4.



HIS classification of Scripture texts is made on the principle, that the Holy Ghost is the author of all the gifts with which men are endowed, whether these are or are not accompanied by His graces. They cast much light on one another. Thus when it is said in Gen. ii. 7, "the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"—we might justly have concluded that "the breath" is the emblem of the Spirit, and that to Him is here specially ascribed the creation of the soul in man; but when we read this statement in conjunction with Job xxxii. 8, "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," our interpretation is shown to be just, by the most explicit testimony. Nor are we left to infer that the Spirit merely at the first created the soul, and then left it to the exercise of its own powers; for the remaining texts sufficiently discover that He continues to visit the reasonable soul which He at the first made, and to strengthen and endow it with all the mental qualities which may be necessary to the place which it is called to occupy; as is exemplified in Aholiab and Bezaleel, who, at a particular juncture, were "filled with the spirit of wisdom," and in Othniel, of whom it is said, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel."

Yet, all these influences of the Spirit were distinct from His gracious operations by which He saves the soul, and may have been unaccompanied by them.

Contemplating these passages of the divine Word under this common aspect, we proceed to inquire what are the instructions which they convey to us, what are the lessons we may gather from them.

I. The first and simplest is the nature of the human soul as the production of the Spirit. It is an emanation from Himself. The original account of its creation is worthy of special attention, as that is given in the first cited of our texts. The whole passage is as follows :—"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul." There is an obvious contrast between the formation of the body and that of the soul. The former was made of the dust and was first created. It is probable that when so formed it was endowed with life, that life which it enjoys in common with the inferior animals. But it was not yet complete. The tabernacle of clay waited for its inhabitant. It was prepared for his reception as the earth itself had been prepared for the occupation of man. Then came the crisis for the Spirit's special work, and breathing into him the breath of life, He produced within him "a living soul." "A living soul." It was obviously distinct from the body. It differed from it in its nature as it had done in its formation. It bore the image of its divine author and partook of His nature. It was like Him, pure, spiritual, and immaterial. The immateriality of the soul follows as a natural consequence from the manner of its creation. The body was of the earth, earthy, the soul was heavenly. The one bore the image of the earthy, the other of the heavenly. It is, therefore, immortal, as it is immaterial. In the breath of the Spirit which created it, the seed of immortality was deposited within it. It could not die any more than its ever living parent, who communicated to it of His own immortal nature. These views are abundantly confirmed in all the Scriptures. It is especially noticeable, then, that even death is represented as having had no power to destroy the existence of the soul. This is the most disastrous change to which man became subject. It arose out of his sinfulness. Yet despite of death and sin, the

soul continues to live. Hence, says Solomon, in his description of death, "then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." They were united for a season, but they were never one essence; they were two distinct parts of one being, powerfully influencing one another, yet essentially different in their nature and origin. At death they part and go each to its own place—the body to mix with its kindred dust, and the spirit to appear before its judge and render an account of the deeds done in the body through its influence. Observe also the account which is given of our Lord's death who had assumed a true body with a reasonable soul—"he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." He gave up the soul which had animated his body, while he lived on earth, and therefore his language was, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And we may add the saying of Stephen when he died beneath the violence of his murderers, and left his mangled body on the ground, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." All these notices, which are the more valuable because they are incidental, are in complete harmony with the view which has been taken of the origin of the human soul—an emanation from the spirit of God, distinct from the body, immaterial and immortal. Thus these few notices of the word of God give us more light on the nature and destiny of the soul of man, than all the speculations of all the philosophers, from the beginning to the present time. Their thoughts amount to no more than doubtful theories, while the Scriptures record the fact that the Spirit "breathed into man and so he became a living soul." No wonder our Lord, who thoroughly knew the origin and nature and destiny of man's soul, should say, "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

II. The second lesson deducible from the passages under consideration, is the excellence of reason imparted to the soul by the Spirit, in its first creation. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," and this is mentioned in connexion with the statement "there is a spirit in man." When the living soul was produced in man by the Spirit, He imparted to it of His own reason and understanding.

It is important to observe how exactly this view accords with the account of man's creation, more fully given in another

passage of the divine word. God said, "let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness, so God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him." This image is explained in the New Testament to have consisted in "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24; Col. iv. 10. In other words, it was reason which discerned between good and evil, approved that which was right, and counselled the practice of it. So clear it was that it fell into no error, so pure that it allowed no evil, and so practical that it influenced the whole life, and made it an even course of well doing.

It was by this feature man was distinguished from all the other creatures on the earth. It gave him the ascendancy over them. Hence the account of his creation is connected with the assertion of his dominion, "God blessed them and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth." They might be stronger and swifter than man, yet reason made him their master. In his hand the earth became a garden that yielded food delicious to his taste; the elements were subservient to his purposes, watering it with their rains, and warming it with their sun; and the creatures that dwelt upon it were his servants, to carry his burdens and do all his will.

Reason elevated him to a position higher still. Walking erect upon the earth, he alone of all the creatures God had made could hold fellowship with Him. He was capable of knowing, loving, serving, honouring, and enjoying Him. He learned His perfections from His works, trusted and delighted in them, walked in strictest conformity to them, rendered the glory that was due to their possessor, and found all his happiness in Him.

What a change has come upon man by violating and abusing this gift of the Spirit! "How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed?" This is the origin of all his sin and sorrow—"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Reason has been dethroned. A deceived heart leads man astray. He sees not as God sees. He yields himself to the dominion of a perverted judgment and an impure imagination, and

unholy affections. He is the slave of a tyrannical and depraved will.

It is in exact harmony with this view of man's sinful condition that the Spirit is represented as undertaking his restoration. Christ said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This is the very office of reason—to know the truth; and this is its effect—to make us free from sin. Thus the Spirit would renew upon the soul the image of God in its regeneration. He would restore it to holiness by restoring it to reason.

What a view this gives us of both sin and holiness! Sin is unreasonable. It is so in all its forms. Is it not unreasonable to do that which can produce only sorrow? How you are astonished at the husbandman who sows his field with tares instead of wheat, if indeed such an instance of human folly could be found. Yet such is the conduct of the sinner. "He sows to the flesh, and of the flesh shall reap corruption." And just as sin is unreasonable, so is holiness reasonable. It is the source and secret of happiness. "Our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Above all, what a fearful view does this subject give us of those sins whose direct effect is to destroy reason, even such as is left, in man? The drunkard drowns it in the cup of intoxication. He reduces himself to the drivelling lunatic or the infuriated maniac. This, and all that is kindred to it, is an offence against the Spirit of peculiar enormity. It is in direct antagonism to the work of the Spirit when, in the first creation, He imparted reason to man, after His own image, and when, in the new creation, He would restore him to its dominion by a regeneration.

There is, however, an influence which the Spirit exercises over men, even when they come short of this regeneration, and this leads us to a third lesson from the words that have been cited.

III. The Spirit is pleased often to endow men with gifts which may exist apart from His graces.

This statement may be confirmed by an extensive induction of examples. Two are expressly mentioned in the text. It is said of Bezaleel—"I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Whether he and his companions had been previously visited by the gracious influences of the Spirit, restoring them to an enlightened reason, to know God and choose His service, is not stated. It may or may not have been so. What is here asserted respecting them is different from that influence, and might exist without it. This has often been exemplified. The history of science furnishes many instances of it. Many of the sons of genius have not been children of the Spirit. Who does not know that Scotland's most honoured bard was the slave of one of the lowest of the appetites, and fell a victim to its sinful indulgence? Or who is not aware that the highest poetic genius which England has produced in modern times, was obliged to banish himself, because of his vices, from the society of the honourable and virtuous? Yet this is a high favour which the Spirit continues to confer on sinful men. As Bezaleel and his companions rendered valuable service in their day, so have many in the same way at all times. The interests of society have been thus greatly advanced. The nations have been carried forward in a career of prosperity. The Church, too, has abundantly shared in the benefits. All the advantages conferred on the world ultimately serve the Church also. Its triumphs will be carried forward rapidly by the march of science, and the facilities which it affords. The Spirit, by operating on the minds of men, is the grand inventor and discoverer, and to Him belongs the glory of all the gifts that have rendered the sons of men either useful or glorious on earth.

The example quoted in Judges iii. 10 is of a different kind. It is said of Othniel, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel." Probably he was a godly man, but this visitation was not connected necessarily with his piety. The same assertion is frequently made respecting others who certainly gave no satisfactory evidence of personal godliness, but much that was contrary to it. Saul is an example of this kind. Yet it is recorded of him—"God gave him another heart, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied." We know both his life and death, how contrary they were to the law of God, and

must therefore understand what is said, of the gifts by which the Spirit qualified him for the government. Even Cyrus, a heathen king, is thus spoken of in the Word of God—"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." God had a work for him to do, and the Spirit fitted him for it. Bodily endowments as well as mental were furnished by the Spirit, as in the case of Samson, of whom it is recorded—"The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan." This is of deep interest and supreme importance. The rulers of the earth are in the hand of the Spirit. He furnishes them with gifts to qualify them for His purposes. He gives them intellectual power, or courage, or strength. Such a view causes us to read the history of the world in a new spirit. We see it with other eyes, and judge it by other standards. It is God in history whom we contemplate. And what hope does this inspire for the future? The Spirit will raise up and influence agents to do all that God has promised. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters he turneth it whithersoever he will." When the time is come, the man will not be wanting to do the work of the Lord on the earth.

Other examples of a similar kind may be found in the church as well as in the world. The Spirit of prophecy has sometimes been given where the Spirit of grace and godliness was wanting. It was so with Balaam. How beautiful and sublime the predictions he uttered. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Yet this man, who exclaimed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," perished miserably under the judgment of the Lord, and this is the monument which the Spirit of God, who spake by him, has left written on his tomb—"Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." The power of working miracles also has sometimes been granted to the ungodly. Judas, no doubt, exercised it as well as the other apostles. Remarkable gifts were conferred on the Church at Corinth. They are thus described—"To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to an-

other the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of tongues." Then, with reference to these, he says, "covet earnestly the best gifts, yet show I unto you a more excellent way." And what is it? He tells us—"though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing."

This is a subject as applicable now as ever. Gifts are often found where the graces are not. Ministers of the gospel have often eloquently preached it to others, while they themselves have become castaways. Members of the Church have had generosity to give their substance to God, who yet withheld their hearts from Him. Some have laboured in instructing others, who yet cast the counsel of God behind their backs.

We must not undervalue the gifts, but we must beware of being satisfied with them. They may be extensively useful in promoting the cause of God, yet they who thus serve their generation need to remember the exhortation—"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith."

It is a melancholy sight to behold men building up a church yet never themselves becoming lively stones in the temple of the Lord. They may do good to others, yet themselves perish. How many were engaged in building the ark of Noah, who never entered into it, and were drowned in the waters of the deluge? So have multitudes had a share in the promotion of the Church on the earth, who yet never inherited its portion. A man may build and maintain the edifice where God is worshipped, yet never himself worship God "in spirit and in truth." Gifts may abound, and their advantages be many, while the soul may be wanting in the graces of the Spirit, and be lost for ever.

III.

The Striving of the Spirit with Man.

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man."—GEN. vi. 3.

"Turn you at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit unto you."—PROV. i. 23.

"They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy."—ISAIAH lxiii. 10.



THESE three texts treat of one subject, the striving of the Spirit with men. While, however, their subject is one, they present it under different aspects. And taken together they exhibit it in great completeness.

It is customary, when we wish to examine an object with minuteness, to look at it in various lights. A picture suppose. We look at it on this side, then on the opposite, or we place ourselves directly before it. And when we have looked at it from every stand-point that can cause the rays of light to fall upon it in different directions, it is then we are fully prepared to judge of its fidelity and excellence. So also it is with any subject that engages our attention.

What then are the aspects under which the subject treated in the passages before us is presented? In the first, the doctrine is taught by assumption that the Spirit does strive with men. In the second, encouragement is held out to all who shall yield to His solicitations that an unspeakable blessing shall be conferred upon them. And in the third, a most solemn warning is addressed to all who shall rebel against the Spirit, and vex Him, that He will overtake them with the heaviest judgments. Let us then consider this testimony to the Spirit, thus presented to us in its completeness.—NEH. ix. 30.

I. It is assumed that the Spirit strives with men. All men are meant, the wicked as well as the righteous. In the present case it is the wicked who are mainly intended, as is

manifest from the context in Genesis. There it is written at the 5th verse, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Of such it is declared, "my Spirit shall not always strive with man."

How He strives with him is in like manner explained in the passage itself. "His days shall be an hundred and twenty years." He would deserve to be cut off at once. He had provoked the displeasure of the Most High, and might righteously be swept away with the besom of destruction. But the great intercessor was pleading for him, "let him alone this year also, till I shall dig about him and dung him, and if he bear fruit, well, if not, after that thou shalt cut him down." The ministry of Noah was employed for this purpose, and there are frequent references to it in the New Testament. Peter tells us, "he was a preacher of righteousness," and Paul says, "by faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Both by the testimony which he bore, warning and entreating the men of his times; and by the work in which he was engaged, building an ark before their eyes, to prepare a place of safety against the threatened deluge, he called upon them to repent that they might not perish in the day of God's righteous visitation. It appears also he was not the only witness, for Jude informs us, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things saying, behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." By such means did the Spirit in the antediluvian age strive with men.

These examples abundantly illustrate what we are to understand by the striving of the Spirit, and how it is conducted toward man still. It may be well, however, to refer more directly to a few of His more ordinary dealings.

One standing testimony by which the Spirit strives with all men is His written word. He is its author. "Holy men of old

spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is addressed to all men. Its motto may be said to be, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Every one should feel, as he takes the word into his own hand, or hears it read by another, that it is the voice of the Spirit speaking to him, and appealing to him by its doctrines and promises, and counsels and warnings.

Another testimony which He bears is by the ministry of the word. This is to convey, and expound, and enforce the former. When one king confers with another on the high questions that are entertained between them, he not merely declares his mind in the carefully prepared document, but sends his ambassador to bear it and treat upon the terms of it. Hence it is written—"The Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them." So also Jesus says to His apostles, "he that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." And all the ministers of the gospel may say, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." The Spirit strives with men by their instructions.

To enforce the instructions of His word and ministers, He also employs many providences. "Hear ye the rod and him that appointed it." Afflictions are the calls of the Spirit's voice, saying, "consider your ways." So also are the expressions of His goodness. And hence Paul remonstrates with the Jew on his high privileges and distinguished favours, saying, "despise not the riches of his goodness and long-suffering and forbearance, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Every event of life may be supposed to say to us, "I have a message from God unto thee." And the attitude becoming us is to stand and say, "here am I, Lord, speak for thy servant heareth."

To these may be added that the Spirit strives with men by the secret and silent expostulations of conscience. It is long before these are entirely silenced. Sin must have seared the conscience as with a hot iron before it ceases to lift up its voice. It has opportunities which no other counsellor can enjoy. In the solitude of the chamber, in the restlessness of the night, in the hour of disappointment, it speaks to the soul. It calls upon memory and the conduct of childhood is called up to plead, it appeals to reason and the foolishness of sin is urged with power, and it summons imagination to portray the issues of impenitence and

iniquity. It is a solemn thought, and should give force to these exercises, that they are the dealings of the Spirit with man. They are usually the last also, as they are the first, which he employs. If these are suppressed, the last hope of penitence is extinguished. But while they are continued, they are the voice of the Spirit in man, saying, "hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Thus the Spirit strives, by the word, the ministry, providence, and conscience. And as an example of all this, reference might be made to the history of the seven churches of Asia. To these however, we shall have occasion to advert afterwards, and therefore notice.

II. The encouragement held out to all who are induced to yield themselves to the striving of the Spirit, "turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

It is deeply interesting to observe who they are that are thus addressed, as they are described in the preceding verse in Prov. i. 22, "how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge?" There are three classes, the simple, scorers, and fools. To these the promise is made "turn ye, and I will pour out my Spirit unto you." Let us consider them separately.

"The simple." They are ignorant. They have no apprehension of truth, and consequently cannot feel its power. They know not themselves—that they are sinners, and to what as such they are exposed. They know not sin, how evil it is in its own nature, and hateful to God. Nor hell, what "the worm is that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." Nor heaven, what is the nature or amount of its blessedness. Nor Christ, what He has done to deliver from the one and elevate to the other. They are thoughtless, the natural result of their ignorance. They are borne down the stream of life, and think not whither they are going. They have never seriously asked themselves whether they are on the highway to heaven or to hell. They eat, they drink, they laugh, they sleep, they occupy themselves as the

circumstances around them suggest. But they are mindless. They have no thought, no purpose, no plan, probably not for time, and certainly not for eternity. They are therefore unwary. Solomon says, "in vain is the snare set in sight of any bird," but it is not so with them. They go into any snare. By any bait may they be taken. And therefore their career usually ends in the depths of profligacy, if they have only the means of indulging it. As Isaiah has described them, "they rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, they continue until night, till wine inflame them, and the viol, and the harp, and tabret, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands."

The second class are denominated "scorners." These are not ignorant as the former, nor perhaps thoughtless, and it may be, neither unwary nor profligate. Yet their condition is one far advanced in iniquity. It is said in the first Psalm, "blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The ungodly, sinner, scornful. Such is the progress from one stage to another. So the first are said to walk, the second to stand, and the third to sit down in the seat of the scornful. They have become very hardened. Impiety is the lowest form of evil they assume, treating with lightness the most solemn truths of religion. It may be infidelity, determinedly opposed to those truths, and arguing against them. Or they may reach the height of blasphemy, and revile the precious revelations of the Spirit of God.

The remaining class are said to be "fools." Not that they are weak-minded. Their characteristic is added, when it is said, "they hate knowledge." They know the truth, by early education it may be, but they hate it. They are such as are described by our Lord, saying, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved." They are in love with sin, and hate the gospel because it so strongly condemns it. They say of its author, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."

Now these are the persons addressed in the encouraging

promise before us. They are reproved, and if they will but turn under that reproof, the Spirit will be given to them. This promise is confirmed by countless examples. Remember the scenes of the day of Pentecost. There was just such an assembly as has been described. It was composed of the simple, who "were amazed and marvelled," the fools who were in doubt, saying, "what meaneth this?" And of the scornful, who mocking, said, "these men are full of new wine." Yet to them was the gospel preached by Peter and his companions. It was accompanied by the divine power of the Spirit. They were convinced of their sin, when in their ignorance and foolhardiness and scorn they cried, "away with Him, crucify Him,"—"His blood be on us and on our children." They were encouraged, "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." The apostle Paul is himself an example. So is the Jailor of Philippi. And in all ages similar examples have appeared. Who knows not the history of John Newton, and the Earl of Rochester, and John Bunyan! There are many besides whom the world shall never know till the day shall declare it. And yet the promise is as sure as it ever was "turn you at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make my words known unto you."

But there is another view of this subject. If the voice of encouragement is not heard, that of judgment will be lifted up in due time. Let us therefore now hearken to what it saith.

III. The voice of warning proclaims, "they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy and fought against them."

It is to be remarked this is cited as a fact, of which the history was well known. The prophet reminds the Jews of what had befallen them in consequence of their continued resistance to the Spirit. They rebelled against his counsels and entreaties, in the Scriptures, and by the prophets; He was vexed by their conduct implying that He had long suffered it, even as an indulgent and affectionate parent bears with the waywardness of his child, until it becomes intolerable; and at length He became their open enemy, and fought against them. This all took place in the life

of the prophets, who had been sent by the Spirit to warn them. They were delivered to captivity and the sword, and learned their sin against God, by the cruelties of their oppressors. In other ages the same lesson was still more impressively taught in the history of the same people. They rejected their own Messiah in opposition to all the testimony of the Spirit in His life, by His apostles, by prophecy fulfilled, and miracles wrought before their eyes. They were therefore cast off as an unclean thing. And to this hour they remain a warning to mankind.

There is another example also referred to in the antediluvian age. They were threatened—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" and one hundred and twenty years were prescribed as the period when, if His strivings were resisted, His judgments would be poured out. The result is well known. The ministers of the Spirit were mocked, and all His counsellors were set at nought. The deluge therefore came, and swept the guilty race away. They only were saved who had submitted themselves to the counsels of the Spirit.

In later times, an example is furnished in the seven churches of Asia. They were addressed, suitably to their several conditions, by the exalted Head of the Church. A tone of great faithfulness marks these addresses. They are uttered by Him who is called "the faithful and true witness." And in the case of every one of them it is said—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." They did not hear, and the threatenings have been executed. "The candlestick has been removed out of its place." Error, and sin, and sorrow have supplanted truth, and righteousness, and prosperity. The lesson is visible to the eye of every traveller; and he that runs may read it.

It is substantially the same still. It is with individuals as with churches. A hardening process is going on in the mind of every one who does not yield to the strivings of the Spirit. And it will be important to trace some of the forms under which this deteriorating process may be going forward. When is there reason to fear the Spirit is ceasing to strive with any soul?

One evidence is the neglect of divine ordinances. The time was when the Word was read, the Sabbath remembered, and the sanctuary frequented; but it is not so now. The Book of God lies unopened, the day of God arrives unwelcomed, and the house

of God is opened in vain. Intercourse with God is not sought. Even private prayer is restrained before Him. It is then evident the Spirit is ceasing to strive.

A more aggravated form is when outward providences fail to awaken attention. There is prosperity, but the heart is hardened; there is adversity, but it is not humbled. No events, whether mercies or trials, avail to move the soul. Then may we fear the sentence has been passed—"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone."

It is still worse when habits of sin are indulged without remorse. This is the case which our Lord seems to contemplate in His parable of the unclean Spirit—"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to mine house, whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Or it may be that the soul shall be given over to the agony of despair. It is not to be overlooked that the very gracious promise which has been considered in this discourse is followed by a fearful threatening—even this—"Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and despised my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you."

Surely it is the wisdom of all to avoid the possibility of one day being brought into such a state. And how shall this be done? Simply by yielding to the Spirit, who strives with us. And how so?

In the first place, abandon the sin which he hates and will not tolerate. He puts His law in your hands. Be resolved, in His strength, to give up all you find it condemns. He will not be satisfied with less.

In the next place, accept the Saviour whom He reveals. His grand office is to recommend Him to the sinner. "He shall glorify me," said Christ, "for he shall receive of mine, and show

it unto you." There is no other way in which sin can be taken away, and the Spirit counts Himself dishonoured so long as the Saviour recommended by Him is not embraced.

Besides this, the course of life which He requires must be carefully followed. The Word is given to be its directory. It must be the purpose of every man who yields himself to the Spirit to remember the design of His Word, "that it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Finally, His appointed ordinances must be diligently and prayerfully observed. These are His means of grace—the Word, sacraments, and prayer. And all these are by Him made effectual unto salvation.

All these counsels are contained in the exhortation of the prophet—"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

IV.

The Work of the Spirit in the Constitution of the Old Testament Church.

"In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom."—EXOD. xxxi. 6.

"David gave to Solomon the pattern of all he had by the Spirit."—1 CHRON. xxviii. 11, 12.

"Set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee."—EZEK. xl. 4; comp. xxxix. 29.



THE Church is the workmanship of the Spirit. It is this sentiment which we shall consider in the light of the passages that have been cited. Other works of the Spirit are great and good, but this is the greatest and best of them all. This is His saving work on the souls of men, and includes the arrangements of His wisdom and providence to secure it. His work in the old creation, as we have seen, is glorious, reducing it to order, clothing it with beauty, and impregnating it with life. His work on the human soul, as has been considered, is higher, creating it, endowing it with reason, and ennobling it with intellectual gifts adapted to its exalted nature. And His work in the world, as we have contemplated it, is gracious and blessed, striving with men, warning them against sin, and forsaking them only when they have given themselves over to hardness of heart. But now we proceed to another and better theme, the grace of the Spirit exhibited in the constitution of the Church, and the provisions which He has made for its edification and salvation. "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them." Neh. ix. 20.

In considering this subject, it will prepare us for the great principles developed in it, first to explain the passages which have been selected as the text, and this we shall do in their order.

The passages read have been selected out of many, because they describe the proceeding of the Spirit toward the Church in

three distinct periods of its history—at the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the erection of the temple at Jerusalem, and the prophetic up-building of the Church in the latter-day glory. In each of them there is a minuteness of detail very impressive, and no doubt designed to be instructive for all generations. It is this pervading feature of them all to which attention is specially solicited.

The first is the erection of the tabernacle, and the account of it is found in the book of Exodus. In the 24th chapter, at the 18th verse, we learn that “Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights,” and we know that he was there for the purpose of being instructed in the great work about to be done. On this subject he received the most explicit instructions. In the 25th chapter we read, at the 8th verse—“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” And again it is enjoined, ver. 40—“Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.” This pattern is then given in the most exact detail in the subsequent chapters, from the 25th to the 30th chapter inclusive. The plan being thus laid down, an account follows of the miraculous qualifications conferred on chosen persons to render them competent for its execution, as we find in the beginning of the 31st chapter. Its execution is recorded and shown to have been in exact correspondence with the prescribed plan in the chapters contained from the 36th to the 39th. In the concluding verse of the last of these chapters it is said—“Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it, as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it, and Moses blessed them.” Nor had the work the favour of Moses only. God testified His approval. We read in the 40th chapter, at the 34th verse, when the tabernacle was set up, “then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” It is impossible to read these details and not see that an exact conformity to the mind of the Spirit in the erection of the tabernacle, was that which called forth so pointedly the divine approval.

A similar lesson is taught in the history of the building of the temple. The account is found in the 1st and 2d books of

Chronicles. In the former we read in the 28th chapter, at the 19th verse—"All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing, by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." Eight chapters of the latter, at the commencement, are occupied with a detailed account of the execution of the work. At the conclusion (chapter viii. 15) it is recorded—"They departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites in any matter." At its dedication, therefore, Solomon could pray—"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in thy goodness." They only who are conscious of having sought conformity to the will of God can thus pray.

The last example is the most remarkable. It is prophetic, and much obscurity rests upon it. It is contained in the book of Ezekiel, beginning at the 40th chapter, and ending with the last. Eight chapters are occupied with the description, and they are distinguished by the same minuteness observable in the accounts of the tabernacle and the temple. A man is represented to stand with a measuring-line in his hand, and it is applied to all parts of the sacred structure. Whether it is intended to portray the second temple which was built at Jerusalem, or whether it is to be interpreted as a model of the perfection and beauty of the Church in the latter day, it is not necessary, and perhaps not possible at present to determine. One thing, however, is clear, that it enforces the same lesson which has already been drawn from the previous erections for the worship of God. All must be done in accordance with the divine will and pattern. Nothing is left to human wisdom in the construction of the Church. That work the Spirit has undertaken to direct. "As the Lord commanded"—that is the watchword for every builder on Zion's walls, and we shall now proceed to consider the application of this lesson to the spiritual temple of which the Holy Ghost is the builder, and the great principles which are developed by it.

The propriety of understanding the tabernacle and temple as emblems and models of the Church of God to the end of time, is manifest from a single consideration that the same language is, in the Scriptures, uniformly applied to both. It cannot be doubted we have a description of the ancient Church in the fol-

lowing words of the forty-eighth Psalm : " Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide, even unto death." It is equally plain that it is a description of the Christian Church which is given in the epistle to the Hebrews as follows : " Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Yet the terms applied to both churches are the same. In the former case the meaning is literal ; in the latter it is spiritual. The one is the model of the other. They constitute together one church. The laws of both are essentially the same. The principles applicable to the one are equally so to the other. The grand peculiarity of each is, that it is the workmanship of the Spirit. We have seen how that has been taught in the minute details of former dispensations, and we shall now trace the same lesson as it is taught in the constitution of the Church of the New Testament.

1. First, then, it is by the Spirit we are furnished with the Church's directory and guide. This directory is His inspired Word. " To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." This rule is of universal extent. It comprehends doctrines, precepts, and ordinances. Nothing is to be believed that is not written in the Scriptures ; nothing is to be done that is not commanded or authorized by them ; nothing is to be observed as a religious rite that is not appointed there.

Faith and practice must be alike conformed to the written word. It is the authority in the Church of Christ. Let a single proof suffice, drawn from that department which is supposed to be the least important. It is readily allowed that in all questions of religious doctrine the only standard is the inspired Word. So also is it at once admitted in the duty which we owe to God and one another. But the same strictness is not always supposed to apply to religious ordinances. A greater liberty, it is assumed, is here allowed to men. Rites and ceremonies, it is supposed, may be ordered according to circumstances. Let us, then, look at the New Testament practice, at the conduct of Christ himself, when He instituted the Gospel ministry and the ordinance of baptism, and observe what is implied in it. The

record is in the conclusion of the gospel according to Matthew : "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth ; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He first announces that "all power was given to Him," and then He proceeds to exercise it. He does exercise it in appointing the ministry and baptism. Does it not follow that no other had power to do so ? Is it not obvious He desires to convey this lesson ? This is the more clear by His adding that all was to be taught which He commanded, implying that nothing else was to be taught. And then, but only then, might His presence be expected. It is impossible fairly to follow out this passage in our Lord's life, and not feel that He claims the exclusive prerogative of ordering all the affairs of His own Church. Every ordinance which He has appointed is to be diligently observed. Nothing should be exalted into an ordinance which He has not instituted. The Church cannot adhere too closely to this rule. Once violated there is no limit to its desecration. Our fathers called it "will-worship," and they designated it aright. We may think we can improve on Christ's simple institutes, but we are much mistaken. This is a fundamental rule which the Spirit has taught us, by putting the Word into our hands as our sole directory.

2. Again, it is by the Spirit the Church is provided with all its ministrations. We read of the intrusion of Uzza, and again of Uzziah under a former economy, but the law of the New Testament is in reality no less stringent. None can lawfully assume the place of the Church's teachers who have not been called to do so by the Spirit of God. Observe the doctrine inculcated by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, fourth chapter at the eighth verse, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These are the gifts of the Spirit, dispensed by the ascended Saviour, as is plain from the psalm from which the words are a quotation. But in what form do these gifts come ? We are informed "He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Christ." It is blessed to observe the union between the work of Christ and that of His Spirit. The Saviour purchased the Spirit for the Church, and His residue is with Him. The Spirit provides the instructors which it requires. He calls them to their work, and qualifies them for it, and helps and blesses them in it. This is a principle demanding the most earnest consideration. It teaches us that if any obtrude themselves into the ministry without the authority of the Spirit, they are those of whom Christ says, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." At the same time it holds out a blessed encouragement to expect that the Spirit will own and honour those whom He appoints. And does it not also forcibly remind us where it is we must look for a faithful ministry? It is to the Spirit, in obedience to the command of Christ, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

3. Once more, it is the Spirit alone who can provide the members as well as the ministers of the church. How this is recognised by Peter, saying, "ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ! We have all seen the rude quarries that the Creator has laid up in store in the fields and mountains of the earth. They are very rude; But the workman enters into them and begins his operations. He clears away the rubbish from the rock; he excavates it from its ancient native bed; he explodes it into many fragments; he applies his chisel and mallet and rule to each of the scattered portions; he squares, and polishes, and beautifies it; then he places it on the prepared foundation, and so raises his superstructure, course by course, until his plan is perfected, and he has provided a suitable habitation for the abode of men. This is the process to which the apostle refers as illustrative of the work of the Spirit in building up the Church of Christ. He finds its members in the rough quarries of the world and He needs to perform a severe operation upon them. Their nature must be changed by His power. It takes much to polish and prepare them for a place in the Church of Christ. "They must be born again, of the Spirit." Then, and never till then, can they become component parts of "the spiritual house," or "offer up the spiritual sacrifices" of

prayer, and praise, and holiness, and usefulness. No more can any member of the Church be fitted for his place, than the minister, by any other power than that of the spirit of God."

4. The same remark may farther be applied to all the progress that is made by the members of the Church. There is a very instructive passage on this subject in Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians, the 3d chapter at the 9th verse, "Ye are God's building," he says, in exact accordance with what we have learned from Peter. Then he warns them at the 12th verse, having spoken as Peter also did of the foundation of the building, "Jesus Christ," "now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it." It is doubtful whether we are to understand these words of the minister who is to beware what members he adds to the Church, and to see they are "gold, silver, and precious stones," and not "wood, hay, and stubble;" or of the church member himself, who is to be watchful over his conduct, and jealous of himself, lest he build in his life what may be compared to "wood, hay, and stubble," instead of "gold, and silver, and precious stones." In either case, however, the lesson is the same, the necessity of cultivating holiness in the Church of God. But how is this to be done? That is expressed in the words that follow at the 16th verse—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." This is for both instruction and warning. We are taught that if holiness is to be cultivated and advanced, it must be by the operation of the divine Spirit; and we are warned that if it is not cultivated, we are without excuse, as the Spirit has graciously undertaken that office in the hearts and lives of men; and we need only to have Him dwelling in us, that we may maintain the character so well described in the portraiture of the Church drawn by Ezekiel—"this is the law of the house, upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."

5. So also it is with all the efforts that are made by the Church, for the extension of pure and undefiled religion in the world. The erection of the second temple at Jerusalem is very illustra-

tive of the way in which the spiritual temple is to be enlarged in the earth. That was an arduous work, and this is still more so. But the success of the one and the other is to be referred to the same source. In the former case it is written—"this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain; before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it." So it was, the work prospered and was finished. It triumphed over all opposition, and so shall it be again. Deadly opposition must be expected as beforetime. The labourers must work as they did of old, with a sword in the one hand and a trowel in the other. But if they do so in dependence on the Spirit who then granted success, they shall find Him to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And they may anticipate the triumphant song, "Halleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

In a word, for all the purposes for which the Church has been constituted, we need only to realize the blessed description of it given by Paul to the Ephesians, and we shall assuredly secure them. O! that it may be experienced in all our hearts and expressed in all our lives—"now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 19-22.

The Withdrawal of the Spirit from the Believer.

“Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”—PSALM li. 11.



HERE can be no doubt that this prayer is offered by the Psalmist as a true servant of the Lord, and that he deprecates the withdrawal of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. This view has sometimes been questioned, as if it were inconsistent with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It has therefore been interpreted to refer only to the miraculous gifts, and not to the grace of the Spirit. But such a construction is indefensible. It is unnatural and forced. This scripture, like every other, must be understood in its plain and unsophisticated meaning, however that may bear on our theories of religious doctrine. We must “tremble at the word of God,” and “not use it deceitfully.” David was a man of God. His life abundantly proves him to have been such. He fell into grievous sin. The exercises in this psalm show how he was moved by the remembrance of his transgression. He earnestly sought forgiveness—“According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” He pleaded with God to make him truly holy—“Create, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.” And feeling how he had provoked Him, and fearing that he might be cast off for ever, he poured out his heart and said—“Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

What, then, is the meaning of his prayer? It will be the object of the present discourse to unfold it; and, to prevent misapprehension, we shall endeavour to explain, 1. How it is not to be understood; and, 2. How it is to be understood.

I. What is not the meaning of the prayer in the text? It is

by no means a proof that the people of God may fall away from a state of grace. Their perseverance in the favour and service of God is taught with such clearness and fulness, as to place it beyond all doubt. Our Lord has said—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." Not only is the truth taught, but with a measure of earnestness very noticeable. The apostles concur in the same sentiment. Peter says—"Saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Paul testifies—"He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And how is the doctrine assumed in that noble triumph, put into the mouth of the believer by Paul—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Scripture testimony is complete; so indeed is the argument from grace. If God begins a work in any soul, it is of His own pure mercy. The same love that begins it will maintain it. There is no reason but love to prompt the divine mind from the first, nor can there be any other to the last. His covenant engages that as it has begun so it will end the work. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and this is all my salvation and all my desire." But the nature of the saint's perseverance must not be mistaken or misrepresented. It is sometimes spoken of as if it were merely a perseverance in the divine favour, and this is supposed to continue whatever the life may be. But such is not the doctrine. The doctrine is the perseverance of the saints in the favour and service of God. The one is secured as well as the other. They are never separated in the Word of God, and should never be separated in our experience. So close is the connection, that if at any time the service of God is abandoned, there is reason to fear we are not the

objects of His favour. In such a case, we are required to examine afresh our interest in the Saviour. A cloud is thrown over it which needs to be dispersed. It is to such a time, in the believer's history, the exhortation is addressed, and let us remember it is addressed to those who are supposed to be believers—"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." This is therefore eminently a doctrine according to godliness. If we are not serving God we can have no satisfactory evidence that we are His people. The perseverance of the saints is a perseverance in godliness. These remarks will guard us against misapprehension, and prepare us better to consider—

II. What is the meaning of the supplication in the text? There is one thought which may direct all our inquiries on this subject. For what purposes does the Holy Spirit dwell in the believer's heart? Let these be ascertained, and then we perceive what the Psalmist deprecated when he said—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." He dwells in the heart as a Spirit of light, and holiness, and happiness, and strength, and prosperity. If He be withdrawn, these blessed purposes are not served. Of this the believer is deeply conscious, and therefore he supplicates that He shall not be withdrawn, so as to leave these ends unanswered. Let us prosecute the subject under these views.

1. The Holy Ghost dwells in the believer as a spirit of light. Christ comforted His disciples with the assurance—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, because He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The effect of such indwelling is elsewhere described thus—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Spirit reveals the truth as it is in Jesus, and the soul receiving it is set free. It must mean that it is thus set free from all that afflicted it before. It was oppressed by a sense of sin—of its guilt and power; but now it is emancipated. It can say—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It discovers a provision in the truth by which it obtains pardon and purity

It was the perception of this that prompted David's prayer—"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He felt that he needed both, and he desired both, and he saw both were provided. Let this view, then, be kept in mind, and it will let us into the secret of David's exercises. He had obtained pardon as he hoped, but he had fallen from purity. These two he knew must go hand in hand; but he had fallen from the one, and therefore had reason to fear he did not possess the other. He could not but doubt his acceptance with God. The evidences of his gracious state were darkened. The light which once shone in his soul was turned into obscurity. He was constrained to say—"The enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead; therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate." He trembled lest God was about to abandon him for ever, and he cried—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The very remembrance of former mercies and attainments would render his exercises more bitter. That he had been under the teaching and influence of the Divine Spirit, he could not doubt; but he knew there are two kinds of divine influence, and that they have very different results. There are those which are only temporary, and when they pass away, they leave the soul in a more hopeless and hardened state than before; and there are those which are abiding, and are accompanied by salvation. He could not but fear, from what had befallen him, that the former was his case. The thought, therefore, now rushed upon him whether he had not deceived himself in supposing he was a child of God. Then the thought would arise—Is it possible I was all the time a hypocrite? Then the dread of apostasy would rise up before his imagination. He understood the doctrine afterwards delivered by Peter—"If after they have escaped the pollution of the world, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Such he feared might be his case. The temporary and partial influence of the Spirit under which he had been might be with-

drawn wholly and for ever. He might become an apostate from God and godliness, and therefore, in darkness of soul, he poured out its bitterness, saying, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

2. David deprecated the withdrawal of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of holiness. He had formed high apprehensions of the value of holiness. This is manifest from all his writings and history. He understood its nature, how it has its seat in the heart, and must be expressed in all the relations and conditions of life. We need not go beyond the psalm from which the text is taken for evidence of these statements. He says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." His views were correct of what he was by nature, and of what he needed that he might be holy. But such holiness, he knew, the Spirit of God alone could either produce or promote within him. What, then, must be the consequences if the fears which he now began to entertain were realized? If it should prove to be true that all his former professions were unsound and his hopes baseless, that he was mistaken in thinking himself a truly converted man, how would it fare with him? The Holy Spirit would be withdrawn from him, and it would be seen what he was. He would not attain to holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." Instead of holiness sin would have dominion over him. His heart would discover all its pollution. His life would be disordered by ten thousand deformities. The contemplation of the possibility of such an issue filled him with alarm. It was not merely the disgrace which he should suffer in the eyes of men that distressed him—the idea of being separated from God was more agonizing. Could it be so that the holiness which he had once so prized himself, and so earnestly recommended to others, should never be his portion? O! how natural that under this darkness and distress of mind, he should cry, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

3. He feared his withdrawal as a Spirit of happiness. David had exquisite enjoyment in God. His psalms are abundant evidence what precious hours he must have spent in secret devotions. They reveal also the amazing enjoyment he experienced in the public services of the sanctuary. His separation from these was accompanied by great bitterness. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for the living God; when shall I come and

appear before God?" His reason, however, for thus desiring the ordinances of religion was that in them he enjoyed the influence of the Divine Spirit. This is apparent from another Psalm—"O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." It was not without good reason the Psalmist felt his happiness to be thus dependent on the Spirit. He was thus led into fellowship with God. In that high and holy communion he experienced all the blessedness of which a rational and immortal soul was capable. He felt himself as a creature in the hands of the Creator, a sinner with his Saviour, a child in the presence of his heavenly Father, basking in the smiles of his countenance. But now all was changed. Private devotions were dead, public services were powerless, the animating spirit was gone that once filled him with joy and peace in believing. He was alarmed to think whither all this must lead him, and in what it must end. And so he cried in the earnestness of his soul, feeling that his happiness was at stake, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

4. He deprecated His withdrawal as a spirit of strength. He knew how the Lord was accustomed to deal with His servants—that He was pleased in His providence often to try them that they might know themselves. He had read of Abraham—"God did tempt him and said unto him, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I will tell thee of." He was acquainted with what Moses had said to Israel: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no." Might he not therefore expect that God would deal with him in like manner? Especially, as he had so far departed from him, he might anticipate heavy chastisements. He had been already warned by Nathan what he might expect—"The sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised

me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." There was a foreshadowing of the sad events that subsequently occurred in the history of his family. But how was he to meet all this? He felt he had no strength. He was weakness itself. Calamitous experience had proved how unequal he was to withstand temptation. When it should come upon him again, increased by sorrow, the effects might be even more disastrous. There was no hope but in the strength that was Almighty. If the Lord did not hold him up he must fall. But that arm was sufficient to sustain him. The doctrine which he inculcated was, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for ever more." How consistent then for him to pray, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

5. Finally, he knew that if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from him, he could have no prosperity in any undertaking, and therefore he deprecated his removal. He could not prosper in his own soul. Instead of the vigorous exercise of all the graces, they would be languid and uncertain. Faith would be weak, hope discouraged, and love cold. There would be no success in the works which he desired to prosecute. Saul had said to him when he went forth against the giant of the Philistines in his youth, "the Lord go with thee." These words would be remembered, for the Lord went with him and he prevailed. The same blessing was needed still in every enterprise, and if withheld, it must prove a failure. He would have no prosperity without it in his family. They might be the sons and daughters of a king, but what availed it if they were not holy? They would only be a terror to themselves, and an injury to others. He would not see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in the Church. This was a bitter thought to him. Knowing how he had injured it, he could not help crying out, "do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem." His kingdom would not prosper. Well did he know what was required of those who ruled in the kingdoms of men. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." All these high interests were at stake. They were placed in his hands, but he was incompetent to sustain

them. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." Knowing this as he did, how could he but pray, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

In conclusion, it is important to observe that the withdrawal of the Spirit from the believer is supposed to be penal. David deprecated it as an evil to which he had exposed himself by his misconduct. The same is the view of the Apostle Paul—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." The fact is assumed that the Spirit may be grieved, and we are taught both how that may be done and how he may be cherished. Let us be admonished by the example of David. We see what must be the consequences if we grieve the Spirit and He depart from us. We shall be given over to darkness, and sin, and sorrow, and weakness, and failure. But, on the contrary, let the Spirit be cultivated—let us "live in the Spirit—walk in the Spirit—and be led by the Spirit"—and we shall have light, and holiness, and peace, and strength and success. Let us thus contemplate the text as a great practical question, and not one of unprofitable debate. Let us see that we have the Spirit, and say to every obtruder in the language of the Song—"Awake not my love, nor stir him up till he please." Let us never provoke God to withdraw him, but ever pray, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

VI.

The Omnipresence of the Spirit.

"Whither shall I go from thy presence?"—PSALM cxxxix. 7.



THE question of the text assumes the omnipresence of the Spirit of God. It is so explained in the connected clause of the verse, "or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" This view of the omnipresence of the Spirit occurs in a most sublime celebration of the divine omniscience: "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my downsitting and uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." These two perfections are properly associated. They are not only kindred attributes, but essentially involved in one another. Presence and knowledge are not necessarily combined in any human being. Man is ignorant of much that is around him, and of many things with which he is constantly in contact. Even angels may be in the same condition; but omniscience and omnipresence cannot be separated. The one is inherent in the other. Either is infinite, and where there is infinity in any perfection it must attach to all. Accordingly, in this magnificent psalm, whence the text is taken, the divine omniscience and omnipotence are spoken of indiscriminately. It is sometimes the one, and sometimes the other. In like manner we shall treat of them in the present discourse, the object being to set forth the omniscience or omnipresence of the Spirit.

It is needless to adduce any proof of such perfections in the Spirit. The interrogation of the text may be said to assert them in the strongest manner. It will be more suitable and more fitted for edification to indulge a few reflections on them. What are the thoughts suggested by the question—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?"

1. In the first place, it reminds us of the personality of the Spirit. It is absurd to speak of the omnipresence of an attri-

bute. God is omnipresent in the exercise of all His perfections, but we would not say of any of them it was omnipresent. This, and every other infinite attribute, must attach to a person. And when the Spirit is declared to be omnipresent, it amounts to an assertion that He is a distinct person in the Godhead. It is true the use of the term person is sometimes objected to as applied to the component parts of the Godhead, as though it were inconsistent with the divine unity. And it may safely be admitted that it is difficult to find language altogether suited to so high a theme. Still it must satisfy us when we find that this very term is employed by the Spirit Himself, and applied to the Father in describing the Son. In St Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i., ver. 1, it is written—"God—hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son—who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." It is important to observe that not merely is the term applied to the Father, but that it is so applied in the midst of a proof that the Son possesses divine perfection, and is consequently competent to the work which He had undertaken. The force of this quotation has often been tried to be turned aside by proposing other translations, but no one better than what we possess has ever yet been found; and with this example before us, we need not be reluctant to speak of the personality of the Spirit. Personal perfections and personal acts are uniformly ascribed to Him, and following the ordinary usage of language, we must infer it is the design of the Word and its author to teach us that the Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead.

2. In the second place, the question of the text no less strongly assumes the deity of the Spirit. Omnipresence cannot attach to a creature; neither omniscience nor omnipotence can be transferred from one being to another. They must belong essentially to the Being who possesses them. An omnipotent being may enable a creature to perform an act which requires omnipotence. It is so in miracles. But in this case it is the Almighty Being who does the act by the hand of the creature rather than the creature himself. As to omniscience and omnipresence, there may be a similitude to the former in the inspiration of the Spirit which conveys the knowledge of truths that

could not otherwise be known, such especially as are found in the writings of the prophets, but of the latter there is no resemblance known to us in any creature. When both, therefore, are uniformly, and absolutely, and unhesitatingly ascribed to the Spirit, it is impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than that He is God. Nor is this a mere speculative truth without any practical importance. Only think of the work undertaken by the Spirit, and how differently must the subject be regarded! To Him it belongs to make the work of Christ effectual to the sinner. He must reveal the truth to every mind, He must give it power over every heart, He must impart power to obey it in all the life. Who, then, is sufficient for these things? He must possess omniscience and omnipresence, and all other divine perfections. Such, then, belong to the Spirit. It is to encourage us to trust in Him they are so distinctly ascribed to Him. The man who does not know himself, or his sins, or the enemies with whom he has to contend, may be indifferent to this precious truth; but only let him be convinced of what is necessary to salvation, and it will awaken his deepest interest. He must be born again, and he is taught this is to be "born of the Spirit." He must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and he is taught, "God hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." He needs an unerring teacher and an almighty protector and supporter along the path of life, and he obtains the promise—"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." This is the very intelligence he needs; and it is just that which is conveyed to him in the text, assuring him he is in the hand of the Spirit of God, who is omnipresent and omniscient, clothed in divine perfections.

3. In the third place, we are thus conducted to the aspect of the text, in which it is our purpose mainly to contemplate it. The personality and deity of the Spirit, are both implied in it, and could not properly be overlooked, but it is manifest the Psalmist viewed the subject as a great practical question calculated to exercise a mighty influence over his life. Our inquiry therefore shall be, what is this influence? Seeing the Spirit is omnipresent and omniscient how ought we to be affected by it? What is the legitimate use to be made of the question—"whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"

There are three principal aspects in which the subject may be viewed ; as it is fitted to discover our sin, and produce in us deep conviction of it ; as it discloses an unerring expounder of the way of salvation, and so addresses to us the strongest encouragement ; and as it reveals a constant spectator of our life, and calls us to purity and holiness. It is thus profitable for conviction, consolation, and godliness. And we shall proceed so to consider it.

1. For conviction. There is no man so degraded as to deny he is sinful. It is a solemn thought that, however hardened and blinded any one may be, yet he will admit that in many things he offends. There is, however, no similarity between these admissions of the ungodly, and the enlightened confession of the penitent. The former are partial and careless and defective, while the latter are universal and bitter. Paul tells us of his own experience, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The time was when he thought comparatively well of himself. He would not deny he was a sinner, but he thought he had much excellence, and he was satisfied with his state. This was when he was without the knowledge of the law, but no sooner did that come to him than he discovered a depth of iniquity within him of which he had no previous conception, and self-condemned he admitted that the sentence of death might righteously be executed upon him. As any true convert grows in grace, he advances in clearer discoveries and more ready confession of his great sinfulness. It was when far advanced in the divine life that Paul said, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." It is no contradiction to say that the better a man grows, the worse he sees himself to be. There is peculiar force in the apostle's saying, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "I am chief." He counted himself to be so, and that not merely in the recollection of the past, but in the consciousness of the present time. Let not this be thought strange. Other men are more wicked and depraved than the penitent. But he judges himself by a different standard from them. He thinks of what might be expected from them and from him.

Considering his own enlightenment and opportunities, as compared with their blindness, it is not wonderful if he shall think of himself worse than of them, and literally say "of sinners I am chief." To apply these illustrations then, if men thus judge themselves, how must God judge them? If even sinners thus see, and own their iniquity, how must the Holy Spirit look upon them? If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Our hearts, blind, hard, depraved as they are, do condemn us. How, then, must God, who knoweth all things, look into such hearts as ours? Only let us think of the inspection of the Holy Spirit, and how must it humble us? He knows all that is within us. Our actions are naked and open to His sight; our words are all heard by His ear; our feelings are patent to His eye; our motives are not hid from Him; our most secret thoughts cannot escape His detection. "Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, it is known to Thee altogether." Not only are we thus now known to God, but our whole life, from the beginning hitherto, is spread out before Him. Our infancy, childhood, manhood and age, are all under His observation. A large portion of our life is forgotten by us, but no part of it by Him. To us much of it is as if it had never been, to Him all exists as if it were transacted now. Nor is it merely that He has been made acquainted with our ways—they have been observed by Him as an eye-witness, and an ear-witness of all. And we must not fail to add, the time is coming when He will cause us to know them all. What has been forgotten will be revived. There will be a resurrection to the memory of the whole life. "God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing whether it be good or bad." "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." It was this sense of the divine inspection and judgment that prompted the Psalmist to utter the exclamation of the text. And his answer to his own question is at once solemn and sublime—"If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even then shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about

me." We cannot escape from God. We may fly to forgetfulness, but He will follow us into its oblivion ; we may fly to our pleasures, but He will enter into the midst of them and confront us ; we may secrete ourselves in the darkness, but "the darkness hideth not from Him, the night shineth as the day." He sees us through and through. What must we think of ourselves in His sight ? How would we like to have our whole life, thoughts, words, and actions, laid open before men ? We would shrink from the exposure. We could not endure it ourselves. But the Spirit knows it all. Let us be convicted. Let us make confession. And let us do so, saying, "whither shall I go from thy presence ?"

2. Again, it is a blessed thought that this omniscience of the Spirit, so fitted to convince us of sin, is at the same time fraught with consolation to the believer. It is true it can be so only to those who under conviction have embraced His salvation, but to them it is a source of unspeakable delight. There are many ways in which it is so, and we shall trace out a few of them.

The Spirit knows what they need. He can enter into the full extent of their guilt and depravity. He sees what is sufficient to remove the one and overcome the other. We may be mistaken. We may imagine the remedy is adequate when it is utterly vain. We can have no satisfaction from any device of our own. But when the Spirit teaches, all is certainty. He is unerring, and we can repose with confidence in His assurance.

Then not only has He the knowledge of what the sinner needs, but He has published the remedy for all the evil that afflicts him. That is His grand office. It is to recommend the salvation of the gospel. Our Lord has summed up His work in a few words, "He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." And He informs us how that office would be executed—"of sin because they believe not in me, of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more, and of judgment because the prince of this world is judged." His whole work is carried on in connection with Christ. In Him He shows the sinner his guilt and danger, and how without Him he must perish. In Him He discovers to him his safety—and causes him to see that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And in Him He assures him of his final triumph, inasmuch as He has already in His own person conquered Satan, and shall continue to do so in the persons of

His people. No views could be so satisfactory as these. It is the sin of crucifying Christ, and rejecting Him that is pointed out, and even that is atoned for and may be forgiven. Christ, as the surety of His people, is declared to have been accepted by His heavenly Father, and that is enough for us. And even in death He conquered Satan, so that we need have no fear, if we only trust in Him.

Nor does the omniscient Spirit only thus reveal an all sufficient Saviour, He knows how best to bring the sinner to Him. He undertakes that office also. In infinite wisdom He arranges the plans of His providence. He sends mercies or trials as He sees they are most suitable. The end is seen by Him from the beginning, and He orders the whole dispensation so as to secure the ultimate result of committing the safe keeping of the soul into the hand of the Lord Jesus.

Having brought the sinner to the Saviour, He does not then desert him. He continues to direct him. Whatever his state or frame of mind may be, He adapts Himself to it. Under all conditions the believer is exhorted to look to Him—whether for guidance in perplexity, or strength in weakness, or comfort in sorrow, or grace in duty. He is never without a friend in the omniscient Spirit: others may accuse him but he can appeal to the Spirit. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” The communion of the Spirit is a source of inexhaustible consolation. And like David in the Psalm, that very omniscience of the Spirit which first filled him with alarm, and convinced him of sin, may, on further consideration, inspire him with joy, so that he shall say, “how precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them.”

3. It remains, in the third place, to notice the omniscience of the Spirit, as it is calculated to promote purity of life. This is self-evident, and may be seen in many ways. If the sinner thought of the omnipresent Spirit, it would almost be impossible for him to indulge his iniquity. “He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten; He hideth His face; He will never see it.” If it were not so, how could the liar utter his falsehood before the God of truth? Or the drunkard indulge his excess before the God of reason? Or the adulterer yield himself to his indulgence

before the God of purity? Or the hypocrite attempt his deceptions before a God of equity? The simple truth, if only really received and cherished, would be sufficient to put to flight the clouds of sin that encompass the wicked, even as the rising sun scatters the darkness and mists of the morning.

It is a similar forgetfulness of the omnipresence of the Spirit that causes the coldness and backwardness of many from whom better things might be expected. Observe the secret prayers of many a closet. Would it not seem as if they were addressed to an absent God? If it were felt that the Spirit was there to hear and answer, surely they would be different. Hearken to that conversation among the people of God. It is trifling, worldly, and unprofitable. "For every idle word men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment." But even now account is taken of them. Would the habitual tone of conversation be what it is if the presence of the Spirit were realised? Look upon those actions: were they done while it was felt that the eye of the Spirit was upon them? It could not be so.

For the revival of piety and the increase of godliness the remembrance of the omnipresence of the Spirit is a powerful stimulus. Let us only say with Hagar, "Thou, God, seest me," and how mighty the influence under which we shall be brought. We know the effect of a good man's presence. Not merely does it reprove and repress evil, but it encourages and promotes holiness. As we hold intercourse with him we imbibe his spirit and adopt his habits. So also would we be influenced by the communion of the Spirit. It would purify our hearts, into which we felt He was looking. It would control our passions, which we were conscious He was observing. It would induce watchfulness, and circumspection, and diligence. It would prompt the prayer with which David closed his meditation on the divine omnipresence and omniscience, and with which we may now conclude ours. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

VII.

The Work of the Spirit in the Mental and Moral Character of Christ.

‘And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.’—Isa. xi. 2-5.



JESUS Christ is the person spoken of in the spirit of prophecy. He is described in His human nature. “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” As a man, His character was formed by the Holy Spirit. From Him He received His material body and reasonable soul, with all His intellectual and moral endowments. It is in reference to the last especially it is said, “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.” He would make His abode with Him in all his fulness. “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.” In Christ, therefore, we have a model man. His character is perfect. There is nothing wanting, and nothing redundant. Since the fall of Adam, nothing of the kind had been seen on the earth. Yet the importance of such an exhibition could not be over estimated; it would be good for angels, and better for men, to witness it. Such, therefore, is furnished by the Spirit in the personal character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true, that character is fully drawn only in the detailed history of the four evangelists. Four are employed to narrate it, because of its supreme importance, and that it may be presented in different aspects. But the verses before us, possess one singular excellence. They present the character of Christ in the most compressed, yet comprehensive form. There is, perhaps, not another passage in the Scriptures, where this is done with so much perfection. Let us, therefore,

now proceed to consider it, noticing in the order in which they are named, the several endowments, intellectual and moral, by which the character of Christ was adorned, through the operation of the divine Spirit.

1. Wisdom is placed first. It is customary to define it as consisting in the choice of the best ends in connexion with the best means of attaining them. What, then, were the ends which Christ proposed to Himself? And what were the means which He adopted to secure them? The ends proposed are thus expressed in His own words—"now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The glory of God was the one great object He set before Him. He would unfold His perfections to men and angels. He would vindicate His law. He would maintain His honour in the sight of the whole intelligent creation. And what were the means which He used for these ends? This also we learn from Himself—"I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." That work is well known. "Though He was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. . . And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He took our nature, He stood in our place, He met the law, bearing its penalty and rendering its demands. By these means He glorified God, revealing Him at once "a just God and a Saviour." He vindicated the law, and at the same time, released its violater. He justified the high song sung by angels at His birth—"glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace, good will to men." He demonstrated the unresolved problem how "God could be just while the justifier of the ungodly." "To the principalities and powers in heavenly places, was known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." This was the grand discovery of His wisdom, but it was not the only one. His whole life on earth was guided by it. Every word He uttered, every act He performed, was precisely such as it ought to have been. He never erred; let His life be examined with the most scrupulous care, and no mistake can be pointed out. No man can look back on his own life, nor can any one record the

life of another, without being obliged to acknowledge many errors, but it was not so with Christ. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is expressly denominated "wisdom," by Solomon. He personified it. We may, therefore, resign ourselves to His direction without reserve. As we are followers of Christ, we are safe. "He of God is made unto us wisdom." And to instance only one example, let us learn the great lesson of His life—to sacrifice everything to the honour of God. He said Himself—"he that loseth his life shall save it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." This is wisdom—the wisdom of Christ and of His Spirit.

2. Understanding is allied with wisdom in the text. They are similar to one another, but not identical. Wisdom may be said to rest on understanding as its basis. It makes choice of the best ends and means, because an enlightened understanding enables it to apprehend what they are. It is a lamp lighted up in the soul, by which it perceives all things as they really are, and knows how to act in relation to them. In Christ, this understanding was very conspicuous. All things were patent to Him in their true character. How He estimated, for example, the value of the soul, and expressed it, saying, "what shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world and lose his soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" How clearly He perceived the true nature of sin, when He warned men against it in such terms as these—"if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." How justly He apprehended the comparative claims of this world and of the next, when He exhorted—"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed), shall be added unto you." He understood human nature. "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." He knew God—"no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." O! how he entered into the principles of human conduct when He laid down its fundamental laws, saying—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In a word, "there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." His understanding was perfect. As a man, it was not infinite. There were some things which He did not know. He therefore tells us of the day of judgment—"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the Son, nor the angels, but my Father who is in heaven." But though not infinite, it was perfect. So far as it extended, it was liable to no misapprehension; and it comprehended all that was needful for the high and holy purposes of His divine mission. To be fully qualified for our place and duty, we need only to see what concerns us as Christ saw it. What we should aim at is to be able to say, "We have the mind of Christ." And hence, when the Apostle Paul poured out his most enlarged desires for the Church at Ephesus, it was in these words—"I cease not to make mention of you in our prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe." This truly is to have "the spirit of wisdom and understanding."

3. A fresh and additional view is given in the next term—"a spirit of counsel." It is distinguished from those already considered by the idea that Christ was ever under the guidance and government of the Spirit. Not merely did the Spirit endow Him with unerring wisdom and boundless understanding, but in every step that He took He was influenced by Him. He followed the immediate counsel of the Spirit. It is written of Him—"Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Even in going up to that fearful encounter He was under the guidance of the Spirit. On another occasion it is said—"He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." We have thus the assurance that in all He did He expressed the mind of the infallible Spirit. Whatever lessons He delivered, whatever actions He performed, all were suggested by Him.

Not that there was any constraint upon Him. The human will is not forced by the Spirit when it obeys Him. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." This was eminently true of Christ. He walked in the light of the Spirit, and delighted to do His will; and as He received counsel from Him so He imparts it to us. "His name shall be called Counsellor." His example has left a bright track behind Him which all may see and follow. The Spirit, besides, is with Him, to dispense to those who wait for Him. John tells us—"I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Hence the promise—"Acknowledge me in all thy ways and I will direct thy steps." How wise to embrace it! "He that leaneth to his own understanding is a fool." In every step we take we should look for divine guidance. The familiar proverb is a just one—"He is well guided whom God guides." It is then the Spirit of the Lord is with us as a Spirit of counsel, as He was with Christ, and as He is at His disposal.

4. To this it is most appropriately added—"a Spirit of counsel and might." He is strong who follows the counsel of the Spirit. There is power in doing that which is right. Invincible courage is found in those who are conscious of being engaged in a righteous cause. But, besides this inherent and essential energy which nerves the man who does the will of God, there is a direct and immediate impartation of strength to him from the source of all might. This is abundantly exemplified in the history of Christ. He says distinctly of His own miraculous works—"I cast out devils by the Spirit of God." And the same is true of His private deportment. In the great assault of the wilderness He met every temptation of Satan by the quotation of a scripture which the Spirit had furnished. He acknowledged His constant dependence by the habit of prayer; and in this, as in everything, He is the model of His people. When the Apostle Paul was assailed by temptation, he cried to the Lord and obtained an answer—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And he concluded—"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. When I am weak then

am I strong." And he has left this counsel to all who would successfully resist the wicked one—"Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

5. To this is added "the Spirit of knowledge." Wherein, it may be asked, does it differ from the operations of the Spirit already noticed? It seems to be expressive of the experience of the former blessings. The Spirit of wisdom directs our choice; the Spirit of understanding discerns the ground on which that choice rests; the Spirit of counsel continues to give direction as it is needed in the changing scenes and emergencies of life; the Spirit of might imparts the strength needful for the day and duty; and now the Spirit of knowledge puts all this to the test, and confirms it by the sure evidence of a happy and undoubted experience. It was so in the life of Christ. He knew what human nature was, for He assumed it in its infirmities. He knew what sin was, for He bore the mighty load of its guilt in the whole course of His humiliation, but chiefly in the agony of the garden and the death of the cross. He knew what the divine favour was, for "He rejoiced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father." He knew what it was to be deprived of that favour, in its sensible enjoyment, and uttered the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a blessed view of our Lord's thus condescending to experience the feelings of humanity, that He assumed it for the purpose of learning sympathy with men. "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We must expect to pass through the same exercises with Him. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord. But we have the same support. His Spirit is with us in all the experiences through which we are called to pass. By treading the same course we learn the same lessons. We are effectually taught, as is possible in no other way, the bitterness of sin, the blessedness of holiness, the joy of salvation, and the hope of glory." "Ye have an unction from the

Holy One, and ye know all things." Thus He is "a Spirit of knowledge."

6. With this is associated "the fear of the Lord." And appropriately so. The Spirit of wisdom is coupled with that of understanding, as it is dependent on it. The Spirit of counsel is coupled with that of might, because in obeying the Spirit we are strong. And the Spirit of knowledge is coupled with the fear of the Lord, because the experience of divine things and piety toward God are ever found together. It is worthy of notice how this last thought is repeated in the text—"and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." We have only to know God experimentally that we may fear Him. There is also the reaction of the fear of God on our knowledge of Him. If there be the Spirit of piety, there will be a clear discernment of divine things. The right moral will produce the right intellectual state of mind. If the heart be sound the understanding will be clear. The piety of Jesus lay at the foundation of His perfect knowledge. He felt aright, and therefore thought aright. How deep was His piety! It was expressed in public and in private. He neglected no ordinance, but in that respect "fulfilled all righteousness." "He went, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." He spent whole nights in prayer to God. "Rising up early in the morning, a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." He lived in fellowship with His heavenly Father. And the same spirit is conferred on His people. Devotion of mind is one of their essential characteristics. Paul congratulates the Colossians that their minister, Epaphras, "had declared unto him their love in the Spirit," and then he pours out this prayer for the increase of their piety—"Since the day we heard it we do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus intimately and essentially are the fear of the Lord and the spirit of knowledge united with each other.

7. The remaining portion of the text seems designed to describe the conduct of our Lord, under the Spirit, towards those with whom He was associated. It should be distinguished by freedom from prejudice, by justice and fidelity. These features will be found to comprehend the substance of what is added.

Freedom from prejudice. "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears." He would not be carried away by deceptive appearances. No outside glitter would dazzle Him. No mere profession would lead Him astray. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Judas with all his ingenuity did not conceal himself from Christ. Neither can we. "His eyes are as a flame of fire." He will render to every man according to his deeds. And He demands the same of us, saying, "judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Justice. "With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." Call to mind His address to the Pharisees. Let His discourse in the twenty-third chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, be studied as a model. Again and again He addresses His influential auditors—"woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." With an unsparing hand He lays bare their oppression and pride, and self-deception, and false zeal, and does not fail to warn them, "behold your house is left unto you desolate." So also He says to us, "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice as a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother."

Fidelity. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." So it was in every condition of life, and with all classes of men. He allowed no departure from rectitude in His own conduct, and He tolerated none, without reproof, in others. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He could say, "the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." In His own family, among friends, among enemies, at home, abroad, He was the same. "The law of truth was in His mouth, and iniquity was not found in His lips."

It is a high privilege to have thus presented to us a perfect example. We can point to the life of Christ, and without exception say, imitate it. "He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps." It is observable not only that all other men have failed, but that the most eminent among them have fallen when they were supposed to be most strong. Moses was the meekest man on earth, yet he sinned by losing self-government, and speaking unadvisedly with his lips. David was the purest of men, yet he fell into the vilest impurity. Peter was the most courageous, yet cowardice overcame him. We must "cease from man." But we can turn to Jesus with satisfaction. We can say, "grow up into Him in all things." "Let the mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus." "Walk even as He also walked." Especially remember as His character was formed by the Spirit, so is it the office of the same Spirit still to form the character of His followers on His model. Let your habit therefore be, "looking unto Jesus,"—both as a Saviour and an example—trusting in Him, and copying after Him. As the artist copies the likeness upon his canvass, so transfer you the likeness of Christ into your own character—and thus will you evidence that "the Spirit of the Lord rests upon you."

VIII.

The Work of the Spirit in the Restoration of the Jews.

"Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."—ISAIAH xxxii. 15.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 27.

"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."—EZEKIEL xxxvii. 9.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."—ZECH. xii. 10.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."—ZECH. xiii. 1.



ALL these passages have a primary reference to the restoration of the Jews. This is abundantly proved by consulting the context in each case. The first passage is followed, in Isaiah xxxiii. 9, by these words, "the earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits." It need not be said the literal Israel is here described. The second passage is immediately preceded and followed by a similar literal application. Thus in Ezekiel xxxvi. 24, "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land,"—and again, at ver. 28, "ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers." The third passage is directly interpreted by the prophet in Ezekiel xxxvii. 11, "these bones are the whole house of Israel." And as for the last, in Zechariah, the 12th chapter, it is said at the second verse, "I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and Jerusalem." Understanding all these texts therefore as applicable to the literal Israel, the doctrine declared by them is, that the restoration of the Jews is a work expressly assigned to the Spirit of God.

It is by no means to be supposed that these passages have no other application. The Jews are the emblem of the Church of God. What is done for them is to be done, in the highest and best sense, for all believers. We behold developed in their history the principles of the Divine dealing with the Church in all ages. It has, therefore, been customary to use these texts, in their spiritual application to the souls of all men, and this is a legitimate use of them. At present, however, our attention shall be confined to the primary, literal reference to the Jews, and we shall consider their restoration as it is made sure by the undertaking of the Holy Spirit.

In pursuing this subject, we shall notice—1. The state of Israel before the outpouring of the Spirit. 2. The distinct ascription of their restoration to the Spirit. 3. The symptoms and means of that change. And, 4. The change which He will produce upon them. It will thus be found that by taking these passages together, the whole subject of the restoration of Israel will be brought under our attention.

I. A melancholy description of Israel's condition is given in these texts. They all refer to it. In the last it is said, a "fountain shall be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." Such was their state—sunk into sin and covered with uncleanness. It would correspond to the description of Isaiah in his own time—"the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither molified with ointment." Ezekiel uses imagery still stronger. He compares the heart of Israel to the stone for hardness. A spirit of utter insensibility would be fallen upon them. They would be unmoved alike by the judgments and the mercies of God. He even compares them to the dry bones scattered in the valley, long dead, blanched by the rains and winds, and he represents himself as asking, while he contemplated them, "can these bones live?" It is, however, in the passage cited from Isaiah we find the fullest description of the condition to which Israel would be reduced. "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city; because the places shall be forsaken; the

multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks." He tells us what would be the state of both town and country—of the whole land. Alas! his prophecy has been literally fulfilled. Splendid palaces have been cast down into ruinous heaps, or left standing without any occupant to claim their possession. Whole cities have been buried in their own ruins, or have been left without inhabitants. The fertile lands have been forsaken and depopulated, and there are none to cultivate them. We have only to read the records of travellers, and be satisfied of the fulfilment of the prophecies. We may go and see with our own eyes. As to the condition of the people, wherever they are to be found, they are precisely as the Spirit of prophecy declared they should be. Hardness of heart is their great characteristic. They are indeed twice dead. All the sorrows through which they have passed have not produced the slightest impression upon them, so as to lead them to repentance. They are known the world over as the people of "the wandering foot and the weary breast"—yet they are not humbled before God. They are devoted to the world, and enslaved by the love of it. The bitterest enmity still fills their hearts against their own Messiah whom their fathers slew. They have brought upon themselves swift destruction, and exhibit to the world a fearful spectacle of the consequences of departure from the living God. The nation that will not serve God must perish. In departing from Him there is the overthrow of all the principles that are essential to national power and prosperity. Truth and righteousness are then fallen in the streets, and with them all hope of advancement and elevation. At the same time, as the weeds and the rubbish accumulate over the fallen city, so evil principles grow in the hearts and lives of a godless people. Their sins find them out and overwhelm them in ruin. It has been so with Israel, and the worst features of the predictions before us have all been realized in their sin and sorrow.

Is there then no hope? In reply let us consider—

II. Their case is put into the hand of the Spirit of God. There is a fulness of testimony on the subject in the passages before us that deserves special attention. The words of Isaiah are very significant—"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high."

“Until.” How much is implied in this simple term? Israel must remain as they are, so long as they are left to themselves. There is no principle of progress or improvement in them. This has been abundantly proved by the facts of their history. Their continued degradation and sin are a proof of the truth of God’s word. We witness in it an undoubted fulfilment of the plainest prophecies. “Until.” A time is coming when there shall be a change. A limit is fixed to the period of their sin and suffering. It will last only “until” the Spirit is poured upon them from on high. That shall assuredly take place. It is implied in the very words of the prophecy. Two Jews were once walking near the ruins of Jerusalem. As they conversed together, a fox crossed the path before them. At the sight the one wept and the other laughed. Why do you weep said the one to his companion? Because in that sight, said he, I behold the fulfilment of the Divine threatenings against our nation. But why, he inquired, do you laugh, brother? Because, he answered, as we have seen the execution of the threatened judgments, so shall we see the fulfilment of the Divine promises. The desolations shall continue “until the Spirit is poured upon them from on high.” The view presented by Ezekiel is still more explicit. “I will put my Spirit upon you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.” This is a wonderful exhibition of the sovereignty of divine grace. God, of His own free mercy, would put His Spirit upon them. The effect would be, He would thus “cause them to walk in His statutes.” And under the constrainings of His love they could not do otherwise than “keep his judgments and do them.” This prophet, indeed, brings out the necessity and efficacy of the Spirit’s work in a very full and forcible representation. He makes God to say, “I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live”—while he looks upon the dry bones. But how does he teach this is to be done? He is commissioned to preach to these bones, and this had a certain effect, but not all that was required. “As I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.” Nay, more, “the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above.” Still, the work was defective—“there was no breath in them.” In this emergency he receives a fresh command, “prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, Son of Man, and say unto the wind, thus

saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." He tells the result, "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. "It would be impossible more forcibly to express the necessity of the Spirit's work, on the one hand, and its efficacy on the other. The same may be said of the passage in Zechariah. The promise is clear and explicit—"I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication." And thus to this gracious effusion all the blessed results that follow are directly traced.

It is of extreme moment to keep in mind the two lessons taught by these views—the utter hopelessness of all other expedients to restore Israel, except the immediate agency of the Divine Spirit, and the complete efficacy of His grace to accomplish so great a work. It is the union of these lessons that puts us into the proper attitude of both expectation and duty. On the one hand, we can place no reliance on anything that man can do. All is hopeless so far as he is concerned. The heart of the Jew is inaccessible to man. Yet there are means to be employed which the Spirit uses and honours. They are precisely those which Ezekiel was commanded to use, and did use with success. He prophesied and prayed. These were just the two that were required, the word and prayer. And so it is yet. These are the means which the Spirit sanctions. Had the prophet neglected them he would have failed in his duty, and could not have expected success. But he was diligent in them, as he was commanded, and he did not labour in vain. To us also it is said, in this great undertaking to seek the restoration of Israel—"Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." This thought, however, will be brought out more fully, while we consider, as we now proceed to do,—

III. The symptoms and means of Israel's restoration by the Spirit. These are unfolded mainly in the prophecy of Zechariah. And the description is very instructive and impressive—"They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

There are two things in these words deserving attention. The first is the occupation of the Jewish mind with Christ. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Ever since the death of Christ, the Jews have abhorred His name. They would not even entertain for a moment the subject of His Messiahship. They esteem it a sin to inquire into the evidence that is offered in support of it. To doubt the truth of their own Judaism is regarded as an apostacy in itself. But it would not always be so. More reasonable views would one day gain possession of their minds. They would consent to consider the subject. They would become calm and unprejudiced. It is impossible to say by what means this desirable change is to be effected, but there is one consideration worthy of notice. The treatment which the Jews long received at the hand of Christians was well fitted to exasperate and harden them. They were regarded with hatred and persecuted with cruelty. It is no wonder if they should transfer their abhorrence of the Christians to their creed. Besides, they observed, that a large portion of the Christian world were the abettors of idolatry. They saw images and the worship of the saints in their sanctuaries. This, they knew, was contrary to the Divine Word, and it filled them with disgust. They need not even inquire into a system which blazoned its error upon its forehead. But a great change has taken place. As formerly all nations persecuted the Jews, so now there is a disposition to treat them with kindness. Laws have been passed in many lands for their protection and encouragement. The Christian churches have been awakened to some sense of the obligations under which they are laid to the Jews. They have learned to say, "their debtors we are." Missionaries have been sent out to them in many places, who have reasoned with them calmly and kindly. The aspect of the Christian Church toward them now is that of love. In the meantime they have learned that idolatrous practices prevail only in a portion of the Christian Church. These are condemned by those who adhere to the Scriptures. They know that this is no part of New Testament doctrine and practice. The consequence is what might be expected—they are prepared "to look upon him whom they pierced."

Supposing them to do so, we can readily anticipate the result, as that also is described by Zechariah—"they shall mourn for Him." As they see the evidences that Christ was truly their

friend and their fathers' friend, sorrow will fill their hearts. As they reflect upon the cruelties inflicted on Him, shame will cover their face. As they meditate on the evils brought upon their nation by the rejection of Him, they will smite upon their breasts. The prophet, therefore, predicts that their anguish shall be of the deepest character. "It shall be as one mourneth for an only son, and as one that is in bitterness for a firstborn." It is compared to a time of the greatest distress in the national history, on occasion of the death of Josias—"in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." It will be universal, "the land shall mourn." It will be secret, and therefore sincere as well as loud and public—"every family apart." The royal family—"the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart." The families of the prophets—"the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart." The families of the priests—"the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart." All the people—"the family of the house of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." Their humiliation and penitence shall be universal.

This is the day predicted for Israel, and when it comes, their deliverance is at hand. As it is with the individual, so shall it be with that nation. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." When any sinner is brought to humble himself in dust and ashes, he is not far from the kingdom of God. And when Israel shall confess their sins in the crucifixion of the Son of God, they shall be restored. "They also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again." Consider then—

IV. The change which shall thus pass over them. It is noticed by all the prophets whose testimony we are considering. Zechariah says—"a fountain shall be opened to them for sin and uncleanness in that day." Their guilt will all be pardoned and their hearts renewed. Ezekiel is more full and explicit,—
 "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye

shall keep my judgments and do them." The clean water is the blood of Christ which their fathers shed. It would be applied to them and verify the truth—"the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." While it thus removed their guilt, it would, at the same time, "purge the conscience," and change the heart of stone, with all its insensibility, into the heart of flesh, with all its tenderness. They would become "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Holiness of life, springing from purity of heart, would henceforth characterize them. Like their progenitors, Zacharias and Elizabeth, they would be found "walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." This restoration to the favour and service of God, would lay the foundation of national prosperity, and that is beautifully described by Isaiah—"the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." What a change! the barren wilderness would be turned into a "fruitful field," as it was in the days of David and Solomon; and what now passes for a fruitful field, should then be esteemed no better than a forest. This state of things should be permanent too, for "then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field"—not visitants for a season merely, but dwelling and remaining and continuing to exercise their mighty influence and dispense their rich blessings. But these who can describe? "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." At peace with God and with themselves, the inhabitants of the happy land would be at peace with one another, and God would make even their enemies to be at peace with them, since their ways pleased Him. Thus basking in the sunshine of His favour, their industry would be blessed with success. They would enjoy the richest blessings of the present life, while they were animated with the hopes of the next. "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting-places." "Happy is the people that are in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Let it be remembered now that while these are the dealings of God toward Israel, they are substantially the principles of His government in all nations. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." In the history of the Jews

God gives a model of the prosperity or adversity of nations, with their causes.

It is virtually the same, indeed, with every individual. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and in the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward." "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ? Prudent, and he shall know them ? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them ; but the transgressor shall fall therein."

In conclusion, let us learn our duty to Israel. The mind of God concerning them, is developed in the passages that have been under consideration. Let our mind be His mind. There is hope for Israel. Let us not deny it nor extinguish it, but act upon it. Especially let us learn to use the means which the prophet did, the word and prayer, for their restoration—preaching to them and praying for them—saying, "come from the four winds, O breath"—until the spirit is poured upon them from on high" and "put within them."

IX.

The Work of the Spirit in Providence.

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”—ISAIAH lix. 19.

“As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people.”—ISAIAH lxiii. 14.

“Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went; for the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”—EZEK. i. 20.



THE providence of the world is committed to the Holy Spirit in an important sense, and in an eminent degree. This is the sentiment contained in the Scriptures referred to. Let us briefly analyse them before we proceed to the illustration of it. (Isa. lix. 19.) The whole verse is as follows—“So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” There is an obvious connection between the two members of the verse. The first contains a promise of the universal spread of true religion in the earth; and the latter is an assurance that such a blessed consummation shall be secured by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who, in His providence, will meet and overcome the obstacles which Satan shall put in the way, so that when he comes as an overflowing flood, threatening to bear away all before him, the Spirit will lift up a standard which shall not only arrest the progress, but roll back the tide of the destructive waters. (Isa. lxiii. 14.) Here is exemplified the former promise. The reference is to Israel in the wilderness. Many obstacles were then raised to hinder the deliverance of the people, but the Spirit at length overcame them all. This is remembered with thankfulness for the past and encouragement for the future, and the prophet says, “Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit

of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name." (Ezek. i. 20.) The divine providence is likened to the appearance of a wheel. It is ever in motion, and the changes that occur in its course are constant—they who were uppermost to-day being lowest to-morrow. More particularly, "the appearance was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." There were many wheels in the complex providences by which the course of things was directed on the earth; but there was one wheel which guided all the rest. It controlled, and directed, and employed the whole mysterious mechanism. This wheel was the Spirit of God. "Whithersoever the Spirit was to go they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were to go up over against them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." The living creature seems to be intended to represent Jesus Christ, for it is afterwards explained at verse 26—"Upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." And again, at verse 28—"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." We are thus reminded that when the Spirit acts in providence, it is as the Spirit of Christ. In other words, He is governing all things so as to establish and promote the kingdom of Christ in the earth. The world is under the mediatorial government of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He employs His Spirit to carry His high and holy purposes into execution. We may, therefore, apply to this view of providence the language of the Apostle Paul—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

The providence of the Spirit of Christ, therefore, is our theme, and we proceed to illustrate it. We shall do so by an appeal to the history of the Church in the world, selecting a few of the more prominent features in which the work of the Spirit was conspicuous, overruling and disappointing the devices of Satan.

1. We may begin with the fall of man. God had made him in His own image. As He surveyed His own work, all the creatures, but man especially as the lord of all, he pronounced it to be "very good." A career of holiness and happiness seemed

to be before the new made world. "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy," as they contemplated the scene and anticipated the bright history of our race. But there was another eye that looked askance on this fair creation. Satan viewed it with envy and bitter hatred. He set himself to entrap it by his wiles, and became the subtle tempter of our first parents. Who could have supposed his success possible? Yet you know the issue. Through his cunning artifice Eve was tempted and overcome, and she drew her husband with her into the snare of the wicked one. His triumph seemed to be complete. The fair creation of God fell under his curse. Death was introduced among the human family. Sorrow rose to the height of his whole nature, for he became wholly sinful. The earth itself was cursed for his sake. And so it appeared as if the whole design of God in the fair creation was frustrated. But wait! "The enemy came in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him." In the midst of the curse the promise of a Saviour was given. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The Spirit of God would one day create a man who would enter into a deadly contest with Satan. The Son of God would meet him on the theatre of humanity. In that nature he would be sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. He would be born of Him, live by Him, and at length offer Himself up, through the eternal Spirit, as a sacrifice to God for the sins of men. All this came to pass. "The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." "He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." To every follower of Christ it is now a sure promise—"God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." And the announcement of the Spirit in His Word is—"The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." What a confirmation of the Word—"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

2. Another illustration of the same truth may be drawn from the singular dispensation which God was pleased to establish at a subsequent period for the preservation of true religion in the earth. This is specially referred to in one of the passages that have been cited, and some of its most remarkable triumphs are

ascribed directly to the Spirit. "He led them by the right hand of Moses, with his glorious arm dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name. He led them through the deep as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." There are some remarkable interpositions of the Spirit in the history of this economy most illustrative of the gracious providence of the Spirit. Such was the call of Abraham. The world was fast falling into idolatry. It bade fair to relapse wholly into the dominion of the wicked one. The horrors and mercies of the flood had alike been forgotten. Abraham and his family were idolators, and it seemed as if truth were about wholly to depart from the earth. Then God appeared to him and called him. The Spirit influenced his mind and he obeyed. "Get thee out from thy kindred and thy country into a land which I shall shew thee." "He went out, not knowing whither he went." God made him the depositary of the truth. He received it himself, he taught it to others, and by means of his family true religion was preserved on the earth. Similar to this interposal, in connexion with the same dispensation was the mission of Moses. The chosen people seemed to be doomed to utter destruction. Their life was made bitter by hard bondage. Every attempt to procure relief was only an occasion of greater severity. Then the Lord sent His servants. The Spirit qualified them for their work. They wrought many miracles and signs by His agency, and at length brought them out with a high hand, singing gloriously, "the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." Their journey in the wilderness is specially noticed. No wonder. They had no food and the Lord fed them with manna; they had no water and the Lord brought it out of the rock of flint; they had no guide and God went before them in a pillar of a cloud by day; they had no protector, and God encompassed them as a wall of fire by night. Well might the prophet say, "the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest." In their own land they were preserved and blessed throughout many generations. They reached a height of national happiness and prosperity such as had never been enjoyed before. And while thus blessed themselves, they became a blessing to others. They shone as a light in a dark world. Placed in the centre of the earth, they were known and observed by all. The thoughtful of all nations came there to learn true wisdom. What-

ever knowledge of God and His service was to be found among men, emanated from this source. Satan was again taken in his own snare—and when “the enemy came in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him.”

3. There is however a more striking illustration still of the gracious providence of the Spirit in the personal history of Christ Himself. It furnishes a remarkable exemplification of the thwarting of Satan and his devices. Observe the time at which He came. Judaism had become thoroughly corrupted. The very means which God had devised to preserve the true religion were seized by Satan and turned to his own account. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” The enemy was congratulating himself that the world was at length his own, when lo ! the Son of God appeared, born of Mary by the Spirit. Look at His life. It was one personal encounter with Satan throughout. Scarce was He born when Herod was instigated to seek His life, but by the influence of the Spirit on the minds of those concerned, it was preserved. When He began His public ministry, He endured a fierce and unbroken assault of forty days and forty nights. Temptation in every form was addressed to Him, until it is recorded, “the Devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him.” A special power appears then to have been granted to Satan. It was said to him, “this is your hour and the power of darkness.” He did His best, but in every assault he was repulsed, and the Devil was cast out from those whom he had been permitted to possess. Still Jesus was pursued by the same enmity to the last. It followed Him to Gethsemane and Calvary, and the grave ; but in all He was victorious. It is very observable how the Spirit influenced the minds of men, so as to make the death of Christ accordant with His own prophecies. He must be crucified, for it was written, “they pierced my hands and my feet.” For a time, however, this result seemed doubtful. The Romans, who were then the masters of Judea, had no desire to destroy Christ. They wished, therefore, to leave Him in the hands of the Jews. They had no objection that He should be put to death by them. If they were to do so, the punishment would be stoning, for they charged Him with blasphemy. But the Jews would not put Him to death. They wished Him slain, but they had reasons for desiring this should be inflicted by the Romans. They clamoured importunately to

have it so ordered. The Roman governor, though avowing his belief in the innocence of Christ, at length yielded, in order to please the Jews. The charge, then, must assume the form of rebellion. For this, crucifixion was the legal punishment. And thus, most strangely, was the fulfilment of prophecy accomplished. How are we to explain it? Only in one way, by the influence of the Spirit on the minds of all the parties concerned. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains." He influenced the Jews and their rulers, as well as the Romans and their governors, and so an issue was brought out in accordance with the purpose of God. To Satan, indeed, it was a small matter how it was effected, if only Christ was slain. Slain He was, but to Satan's dismay, he soon found that only led the way to His resurrection. His death was life to the world. His cross was the price of a crown for Him and them. And thus again, "when the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him."

4. The history of the Church from the death of Christ to the present time, is a continued illustration of the providence of the Spirit. We can only notice some of the more remarkable epochs. Take the Apostolic age. The Spirit so influenced the minds of men, that the world was then at peace. The Romans prevailed over all nations, and a pathway was thus opened to them all for the preachers of the word, which otherwise would have been closed by national jealousies and antipathies. At the same time see the men that were raised up by Him to preach the gospel, and how they were qualified by Him for their work. "They went every where preaching the word, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Take again the history of the Reformation. It seemed as if the dark night of ignorance, and error, and sin, was again to shroud the human race. The glory of Christianity had been turned into shame—but the Spirit interposed once more. He sent Wickliffe in England as a pioneer of the way. He raised up Luther in Germany to thunder against the corruptions of the age. Where Luther was wanting Calvin was qualified to supply his lack of service. You behold in them the resurrection of Moses and Aaron. Different from them all Knox appeared in Scotland, to speak at once to princes and people, as they had not been accustomed to hear. The Lord the Spirit spake by these men. At

the same time he put his hand on Kings, and Governors, and nations, for their sake, and the cause which they espoused. He raised up protectors and friends as they were needed, and He employed the very jealousies and schemes of men to accomplish the glorious ends He had in view. Look at our own time, a more remarkable age, in some respects, than any that has preceded it. It is the missionary age of the world, and all things are ordered so as to make it fulfil its high commission. At the Reformation, printing was invented just when it was needed for the work of the Lord. After printing, the use of spectacles was first introduced, when they might contribute to the prolonged use of the printed word. The same Spirit that raised up Aholiab and Bezaleel, and fitted them to build the ark, was the real author of these inventions, by His influence on the minds of those who originated them. So also in our day. The world is now open. India with its 180 millions of people is subject to Britain, and willing to learn its literature and religion. China has thrown down its own wall that the messengers of the Lord may pass over into it. New methods of reaching those distant lands are now provided. The discovery of steam has brought far off nations near. Facilities are provided for the promotion of missions such as never existed before. A cheapened postage permits the circulation of intelligence, which otherwise must have been confined to few. Nations are put into a position to help forward the work of the Lord. Such now are Britain, and America, and such soon shall be the continent of Australia. The Spirit is exercising a providence at this moment, which may be the means, even by war, of opening the dark and enslaved states of ancient Europe. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." He is influencing the minds of men. He is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working. He is the wheel within the wheels of providence. "Whither the Spirit is to go, they go, thither is their spirit to go; for the Spirit of the living creature is in the wheels."

5. Finally, we cannot omit to mention the providence of the Spirit in the history of individuals. It is as minute as it is comprehensive. While it embraces the earth, and devises plans for the evangelization of all, it enters into the peculiarities of each, so that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without notice, and the very hairs of our head are all numbered. See how the

conversion of one and another is brought about; the persons with whom they meet; the words which they hear; the events that befall them. All are ordered to bring out the one purpose. The same remark applies to their edification. They are not born of the Spirit, and then left to their own devices. All their ways are ordered of the Lord; their prosperity or adversity; their mercies or trials; their successes and disappointments. They are in the hand of the Spirit, and He knows what is best for them. He has undertaken to fulfil the promise, "all things shall work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to His purpose." Of this all who are observant of the divine providences are conscious. They must justify God in all His ways. They are sensible, on the retrospect, that even what they most disliked has been profitable to them. Of their heaviest afflictions they must say, "I know that in faithfulness the Lord hath afflicted me." And from the remembrance of the past, and the consciousness of the present they are encouraged to trust the Lord for the future, and to acquiesce in His word—"Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass," Is. xxvi. 3, 4.

One lesson follows from all that has been said, the duty of observing the providences of the Spirit. We should do so in the history of the past and of the present. God in history—this should be our study. We should make it so—adoring His sovereignty; admiring His wisdom; trusting His mercy; confiding in His power; submitting to His will; and waiting and working for the accomplishment of His purposes. In faith let us rest in the assurance that "when the enemy comes in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him." In peace, "as the beast goeth down into the valley," to enjoy its shade and rich pasture; so "let the Spirit of the Lord cause us to rest." And in hope, let us look at the wheels of providence, knowing "the Spirit of the living creature is in the wheels."

The Perpetuity of the Work of the Spirit.

"As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."—ISAIAH lix. 21.



THE promise of the text is presented in the strongest and most forcible manner. It is recorded in the form of a covenant with Israel,—“this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord.” What condescension it is in God thus to address and accommodate Himself to men! Yet it is His way. “God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Truly we may say with David, “and is this the manner of man, O Lord?” There is, as might be expected, an important reason why God thus deals with men. They are weak in faith, and suspicious of Him. Whenever their minds are brought to a serious concern for salvation, they are not easily satisfied. They can scarce believe that the gospel is true. They need to be assured and confirmed in the faith. Therefore, God condescends to put His word in the form of a covenant. He represents Himself bound to them by ties, which even man cannot break. He names two immutable things, His word and oath. And this is very applicable to the promise of the text. It engages for the perpetuity of the work of the Spirit in the soul of man. This we are prone to doubt. We fear for ourselves that we shall be unable to overcome the temptations which assail us. We fear for the cause of truth, that it will one day be overborne in the earth. God therefore has graciously sustained our faith by the promise of the text,—“this

is My covenant with them, saith the Lord ; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

1. This promise may be considered in its application to the literal Israel. It is only in accordance with the uniform manner in which they are addressed. To take a single example from another prophet, see Jeremiah the 33d chapter, at the 20th verse,—“thus saith the Lord ; if ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season ; then also may My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne ; and with the Levites the priests, My ministers.” The same promise is repeated in the same form at the 25th verse, and we are assured that the covenant of the Lord with Israel would be as enduring as the present economy of the heavens and the earth.

Of the engagement and perpetuity of this covenant, we behold an undoubted proof in the preservation of the Jewish nation. Their continued existence is nothing short of a standing miracle. They are without a country or a home ; they are scattered as pilgrims and strangers through the whole earth ; they are intermixed with all people, and subject to their various laws ; yet they are a separate people, as much so as when they dwelt by themselves in the land of Canaan. The extinction of their national existence might long since have been expected, had it been with them as with any other people. But it is clear God has made a law in their favour. His providence has miraculously protected them. And they have lived throughout many generations ; yea, throughout many centuries, as a spark in the midst of the ocean.

There is, however, a higher sense in which the covenant has been perpetuated. Although they are an apostate people, still, the Lord's Spirit has not wholly forsaken them. They have been cast off for unbelief, yet, there have always been some who possessed a living faith. In every age there has been “a remnant according to the election of grace.” This is necessary to the fulfilment of the promise in the text. “My Spirit that is upon thee shall not depart.” As the Spirit was upon Isaiah, so He would be upon them. And the Apostle Paul has asserted that it

was so in his day, notwithstanding the prevalent unbelief which he so bitterly bewailed. "I say then, hath God cast away His people? God forbid. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant." There never has been, and there never shall be, a time when some of God's people shall not be found among His ancient Israel. In our day there are not a few.

And a glorious fulfilment of the promise is yet in store for the nation. "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery—that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." It is added, "for this is My covenant unto them,"—and "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." It will yet be seen, that whatever part Israel has acted on the theatre of life in past time, they shall act a part not less conspicuous and honourable in the future history of the world. They are reserved for high and holy purposes. In them the truth of God shall be confirmed to all people. All shall be constrained to own that to them God has confirmed the promise of the text.

2. The same promise is alike applicable to the church of God, in all ages, of whomsoever it is composed, Jews or Gentiles. One design of the formation of Israel into a nation, and of their preservation, is to embody the great principles of truth, and exhibit them to the eyes of men. In their call we see the sovereignty and grace of God; in the laws given to them, His wisdom; and in their continuance and prosperity, His truth. In particular, nothing can be more satisfactory than the evidence of the perpetuity of the Spirit's work in their history. Nothing has ever occurred to falsify the promise. Even amid all their national defections, they furnish a living proof of the truth, that the Spirit of the Lord shall never wholly depart from them.

It is to the same sovereign grace we owe the preservation of the truth in the Christian church, and that it has never entirely failed in it. Great defections there have been. The history of the church is a melancholy detail of errors, and sins, and oppressions, and unfaithfulness. Rather, we should say, this has been the history of those who assumed the name of the church. In that sacred name evils have been perpetrated, dishonourable not only to religion, but to humanity. The record might be inscribed,

like the prophet's roll, with "weeping, and lamentation, and and woe." Still truth has not perished. A real church has always existed. And it is pleasant to trace the hand of the Spirit in the means which He has employed to maintain His own cause, and fulfil His promise in the text.

One principal means, and fundamental to all others, has been the written word. Here is truth without mixture of error. "The law of the Lord is perfect." Its preservation in purity is most singular. When we think of its long continuance, the oldest book in the world ; of the various translations into which it has been rendered, now approaching to two hundred languages ; of the different persons into whose hands it has fallen, many of them ready and desirous to corrupt it ; of the changing times and seasons through which it has passed, and which have revolutionized all things besides ; and when we find that out of all this ordeal it has come, as pure as it entered it, we can ascribe it only to the power, and wisdom, and grace of the Spirit, who is its author. By it truth has been kept alive on the earth.

Besides the word itself, the Spirit has ever raised up and qualified His ministers to expound its doctrines and enforce its precepts. Among His gifts, Paul reckons "Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." These have witnessed for the truth by their discourses and writings. As the sailor on the dangerous coast comes to light after light, the one scarce disappearing from his view before another presents itself in the distance to his eye, so it has been in the history of the church. Eminent men have been raised up to succeed one another. What a light did the works of Augustine pour on the Church through the long period of the dark ages, until Calvin lighted his torch at their fire, and then held it up till all the nation beheld its brightness, and many came to walk in its light. The Spirit has never left himself without a witness in the testimony of the living voice or the more permanent labours of the study.

Ordinances also, have been made to serve the same purpose. It has only been by a miracle of mercy that these have been preserved in any measure of purity and simplicity to the church. Even while the Apostles lived, we find the Lord's Supper so disfigured and distorted, that the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians of their observance of it—"when ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." That very corruption,

however, was made the occasion of an exposition of the ordinance which has served for the edification of the Church, from that period to the present time. And now, happily, we can recur to the plain testimony of the Spirit Himself, and under His guidance and by His authority, hold fast the integrity of this Christian rite, and the blessed truths that are symbolized by it—the incarnation of the Son of God, His work of atonement, salvation by faith, and the unity of the Church with its communion of saints.

By all these means a true spiritual church has ever been found on the earth. In the worst times, He has had His “hidden ones,” who have lived on His word, estimated its ministers, and been nourished by its ordinances. In better days the converts of the Lord have come as doves to the windows of the Sanctuary. Here, indeed, there has been an unbroken succession. The Church has never perished. Amid the wickedness of the Antediluvian age, there were Seth, and Enos, and Noah, and others of their spirit. In patriarchal times there were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job. In other ages there were prophets and apostles and martyrs and confessors. “Of Zion it has been said, (always,) this man and that man was born in her.” God has at all times reserved to Himself many thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal.

It will be so to the end. The number will grow and multiply. This is the word on which the Lord has caused us to hope—“His name (the name of Christ) shall endure for ever. It shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.” Thus shall the promise of the text be verified to the last—“my Spirit that is upon thee shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, from henceforth and for ever.”

3. What is thus true of the nation of Israel and of the Christian church, is equally so of every true member of the Church. This is a view of the subject which concerns us individually, and it demands our careful consideration. This work of the Spirit is enduring in every heart into which He has graciously entered.

When first He entered it, it was as a Spirit of truth, and He deposited His own Word there. Now this Word is in its own nature imperishable. Hence it is said of believers that they

have "been born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." This Word, within them, endures throughout the changes that may pass over them. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." In this respect it is in grace as it is in nature. At the creation, when God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind," He added, "whose seed is in itself, upon the earth." Its seed is in itself; it propagates itself. It brings forth fruit after its kind, and then in every fruit there is fresh seed. Thus it is kept alive. It cannot die. A promise is made for its continuance that is, in ordinary cases, indestructible. So also is it with the truth in the human soul. It is a living seed; it cannot itself die. It must bring forth fruit; and the more it brings forth the greater the provision that is made for its preservation and increase. It is amazing how abundant is the seed of the vegetable creation. It is innumerable. One plant yields seed for hundreds, it may be, of its kind. So with grace in the soul. Wheresoever it exists it increases. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Think what each of these will produce after its kind, as it is exercised in the soul. Love has its progeny of kind services; joy, of countless pleasures; peace, of many benefits to ourselves and others; long-suffering, of patient endurance under many forms of evil; gentleness, of a pleasant carriage to others; goodness, of substantial tokens of well-doing to others; faith, of confidence toward God and fidelity to man; meekness, of a becoming spirit toward the will of God; and temperance, of a right use of all the creatures which God has furnished for our service. So natural are these results, that if we do not find them we doubt or deny the existence of the graces from which they spring, and we cannot suppose the Spirit dwells in the heart where they are not produced in the life.

Not merely, however, does the Spirit deposit the truth as a living seed in the heart, and then leave it to its own natural development there—He abides with it to watch over it, and protect it, and nourish it. Even in nature the seed of the plant

must have the sun and rain of heaven. If these are withheld it perishes, however abundant, or vigorous, or prolific it may be. So also the seed of the Word needs to be fostered by the Spirit. It is an affecting account that is given of Rizpah, the daughter of Ai, when her sons and their kindred were slain by the Gibeonites—"She took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." This must have been during a period of some months. What watchfulness it showed, prompted by love and sustained by patience. It may be regarded as an emblem of the Spirit's work, watching over the seed of the Word which He has sown in the human heart. It is exposed to worse than the birds of the air by day, and the beasts of the field by night. Our Lord teaches us that when the word of the kingdom is sown among men, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away the seed out of their hearts. And even when it has found a place in an honest and good heart, if he cannot take it away he endeavours to hinder its growth. There are the thorny-ground hearers as well as the stony and the way-side hearers. The Spirit must therefore watch over His own work in the heart, that it may not perish. This gracious office He has undertaken, and His promises are many and strong. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"—this is His word to all in whom He dwells. "Whom He loveth he loveth to the end." "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

This is a solemn consideration, not merely for consolation, but for warning also. It is indeed comforting to be assured of the indestructibility of the truth, and the fostering care of the Spirit over its preservation in the heart. But by this very consolation we are warned that if the work of the Spirit do not grow in us, we have reason to fear it does not exist. For the promise of the text is sure—"My Spirit that is upon thee shall not depart out of thy mouth, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

4. To complete this subject, there is obviously one other application of the promise which is adverted to in the text. It comprehends the seed of the righteous. "My Spirit shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of

the mouth of thy seed's seed." There is no doubt a literal meaning of the promise, if we can only rightly apprehend it.

The proper interpretation may be derived from the views which have already been considered. The promise was made good to the nation of Israel, not universally, yet really. At all times there have been some in whom the Spirit dwelt, though never in all. So also in the Christian Church. It has been preserved in truth and righteousness, although very many in connection with it have deviated into deadly errors and destructive habits. And even in the genuine believer, while he has been kept in the truth, there has yet been much of both error in his apprehensions and of sin in his life. In like manner, we may expect to find it in the family of the godly man. We must not deny the truth of the promise if some of his descendants depart from the ways of their father. The promise is fulfilled when, agreeably to the analogy of other applications, godliness is found in any that are descended from him, either in the present or future generations. This consideration alone is sufficient to vindicate the promise against the misapprehension of many who have been stumbled and disappointed when they have seen the children of godly parents dishonouring their birth and education. And keeping this interpretation in our view, let us look at some of the forms in which the promise is verified in all generations.

It is often found that the text is literally fulfilled even in the present time. The pious parent is blessed and honoured to see piety in his children. A gracious encouragement is held out to him to seek and labour for it. Paul speaks to Timothy of "the faith that was in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice, and in himself also." The Spirit had perpetuated it from generation to generation. It has often been so in others. It is natural to expect it. The Church of God, there is reason to believe, has in this way been largely, if not chiefly supplied with its members. The promise has been graciously fulfilled to the letter—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The faith of the parent has been connected with the salvation of his house as prompting to the use of those means which the Spirit has blessed.

This success of domestic training has sometimes been universal in the household. There are examples in which all the members

of the family have become the subjects of divine grace. It is a glorious sight—none more so on the earth. Alas ! it is seldom witnessed. God is sovereign, and may not please often to make it so. We must be reminded that we can claim nothing as a reward for our faithfulness. The best parents must own their deficiency ; and whatever is done for any must be ascribed to sovereign grace.

Yet, again, there is much encouragement for diligence and perseverance. The promise runs—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." There is implied an idea that he may depart from it in his youth, and be restored to it in age. Many times has such a case been realized. The seed early deposited in a godly education may lie long, and yet live at last. The wheat that has been found in the Egyptian mummy, buried hundreds or even thousands of years, has grown when it was sown in the earth. It may be so with the seed of truth in the human mind. It was so with John Newton and many more. Parents must not therefore despair. They may never see the conversion of their children. They may leave them in the world hardened in their sins. Yet after their godly parents have died and been buried, their counsels may be remembered, and they may meet their long lost children, as they supposed them to be, at the right hand of God in glory.

Or it may be that none of the immediate descendants of godly parents shall inherit their principles and piety, and yet that these shall reappear in future generations. The family likeness is often handed down from father to son. For a time it may seem to be interrupted, and then it comes up fresh again in a distant age. This holds of the body and perhaps still more of the mind, and it may be found in the higher aspects of the immortal Spirit. Prayers are registered in heaven. The answers may be deferred, but they are sure to come. It may not be in our time, yet we are to wait for them. Eternity may show that they found their reply in the conversion and salvation of our descendants in remote generations.

It may even please God to perpetuate godliness, unbroken in succession, from one generation to another. Many times has this been exemplified on the earth. There are families through which piety has been transmitted from the period of the Reformation to the present time. Some of the names most honoured then are in like manner honoured still.

Nor the well-known name of other days merely. The family has become a wide spreading tree with many branches, and they have all borne precious fruit to the praise of the glory of the grace of God. Godliness has been not merely perpetuated but extended. The river has not only flowed on, but sent out many tributary streams to traverse, and enrich, and gladden other districts of the land. The text sets no limit to its promise, either of perpetuity or extent—"My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever."

One lesson then is plain from this whole subject. It is at once our duty and privilege to sow broadcast the seed of the word. We should take good heed to have it in our own minds and to look after its fruit there. Our aim, personally, should be, to realize the words of the Psalmist—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." While we thus profit by the word ourselves, we are to make it known to others. In the Church and in the world let us seek to promote its circulation and influence. Let us publish it to Jews and Gentiles, for there is a promise to both. But in all this, we are to remember the dependence of the word and of ourselves on the Spirit of God. Both are mentioned in the text. They can never be separated. The word can effect nothing without the Spirit. The Spirit will effect nothing without the word. It is when the word is used in dependence on the Spirit we may expect the fulfilment of the promise—"This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever."

XI.

The Work of the Spirit in the Building of the Second Temple.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."—ZECH. iv. 6, 7.



IN every movement for the maintenance and promotion of religion, recorded in the Scriptures, a distinct and important place is assigned to the work of the Spirit. When the tabernacle was erected He is said to have qualified Aholiab and Bezaleel for its construction. When the temple was built at Jerusalem, it is recorded "David gave to Solomon, the pattern which he had by the Spirit." And here, in like manner, when the second temple was erected, we are informed, it was "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts; and the head stone thereof was brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

In this work of the Spirit there are two things observable—that all was effected by Him, and yet that in everything He employed the agency of man. Hence it is of the principal agent, whom He was pleased to employ, that it is written, "Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

The history of this work of the Spirit is given in detail in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They record the steps that were taken, throughout a period of about one hundred years, in the rebuilding of the city and temple of Jerusalem. It is therefore of the utmost importance, as it is of the deepest interest, to observe the proceedings of the Spirit in the accomplishment of such an object. It is not in vain that the record is so full in the Scriptures. That was a model work. As it was done, so may we expect that the whole work of the Spirit shall be completed on the earth. As the second temple and city were built, so may

we expect that the spiritual temple, the Church of Christ, shall be raised in the world, and that the world shall be brought under the dominion of its holy and heavenly principles. Our object, therefore, shall be at present to mark the steps of the Spirit in the progress of this great work. (Joel ii. 28-32 ; Hag. ii. 6-9.)

1. The first thing that strikes us in the history is, that He gave a deep concern to a few chosen persons, to see the work undertaken and accomplished. Such were Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The deep exercises of the last two are fully recorded for our instruction. Both betook themselves to secret earnest prayer. The former tells us, "at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness, and having rent my garment and mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God." The prayer which he uttered is written as a model for future suppliants. Nehemiah describes his exercise thus,—“I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” It was thus the blessed work was begun by the Spirit. It was in the hearts of these men, and others like-minded, and in exercises of humiliation and prayer.

Now, it is worthy of special notice, that in the 102d Psalm, which is prophetic of the universal triumphs of the gospel, these are represented as having been preceded by the most earnest and importunate supplications. The suppliant cries, "hide not thy face from me when I am in trouble ; incline thine ear unto me ; in the day when I call, answer me speedily." This trouble was not for anything personal. It was the low state of religion that caused it. The bitterest feelings are poured out, and then as a natural sequel, the desired object is described as being gained. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come ; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord."

"Written for the generation to come." Mark this. It is as if the Spirit informed us how we may obtain His help. It is by prayer, especially such prayer as was offered by these men of God, secret, earnest, agonising. This puts it into the power of the lowliest to exercise the mightiest influence on the earth. What could Ezra do ? He was subject to a heathen prince, and must be obedient to all his pleasure. What could Nehemiah do ? He was a servant to an arbitrary king. "I was the king's cup-bearer." Yet with these men originated one of the most blessed

revivals of true religion. In their hearts, and closets, a work was begun, which upheld the cause of God in the world. And wherever a similar spirit, and such exercises, shall be found even in a few, we may rest assured the Spirit is again about to do a signal work in the earth.

2. The humiliations of the Lord's servants were speedily followed, indeed accompanied by the influence of the Spirit on the minds of the heathen kings, whom they served, and in whose power it was to hinder or further the work on which their hearts were set. Cyrus was one of them, and it is recorded of him; "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem." Artaxerxes was another mighty king, and Nehemiah had prayed, "prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Well, scarce had the prayer gone out of his lips, when by a train of the most natural events, that very man, the king, proposed that his servant should go up to "the city of his Father's sepulchres, and build it." All human calculation would have pronounced, that in either case, the hopes of these servants of God were vain, and that they could not expect to see them realized. The event proved that the heart of kings is in the Lord's hand, and that we have only to ask Him, and He will turn them as we desire for the extension of His own cause.

It is good, and should call forth our gratitude to find such examples as these upon record. Constituted as society ever has been, a mighty influence is placed in the hands of a few persons. With them it is to open or close the path of the messengers of the Lord. Let us not forget there is one mightier than the mightiest of them all. Cyrus and Artaxerxes were absolute lords of the earth. Yet they were brought under an influence which they did not understand, but which they could not resist. It gave them even the highest satisfaction to comply with it.

It is impossible to look abroad on the world at present, and not see there is such an influence upon it still. Many have been offering the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," and the Lord has been opening the way in a manner most unexpected. A century ago India was all closed, now it is all open to the preachers of the

cross. Burmah could not be entered fifty years ago, now there are more openings than the church is prepared to embrace. China, so long sealed up, is heaving with mighty throes to cast off its oppressors, and inviting the ministers of the word. Our own land affords another example to some small extent. Alas ! it is yet not altogether free to hear the truth. The continent of Europe is hanging in the balance, and hopes are entertained that God is about to burst its bonds. What a time for prayer. Oh ! for many an Ezra and Nehemiah. Were cries like theirs to ascend to heaven, mighty changes would soon pass over the face of society. Many a Cyrus and Artaxerxes would declare themselves for the Lord's cause. The days of the second temple would return, and God would be known, as of old, "the hearer of prayer."

3. Contemporaneously with the goodwill of heathen kings, the Spirit gave another indication of His mighty power, by disposing the hearts of His own Israel to do the work of the Lord. This is no less essential than the other. The opportunity might be afforded but not embraced. Happily it was at this time joyously and vigorously embraced. No sooner had Cyrus issued his proclamation than many of the Jews declared their readiness to obey and go up and build. Their names are recorded for their honour. It was an arduous undertaking. They had, with few exceptions, been born and reared in the land of their captivity. They had become accustomed to its ways, and it was their home. Yet at the call of the Lord and the king they went away, although it might be said of them as of their great forefather Abraham, "not knowing whither they went." So also under Nehemiah. The people addressed themselves to the work in right earnest. They built the wall of the city, every man taking the part over against his own dwelling. The history of their toil is most instructive. Individuals, families, communities, all "had a mind to work." It was the doing of the Lord. Their harmony, and diligence, and zeal showed they were moved by one spirit. The rain that then fell from heaven was not a fitful shower, that was attracted only by the loftier eminences, it covered the land. Not the rulers only, but all the people felt the genial influence, and a lovelier sight could not be seen than the universal engagement of the whole people in the work of the Lord. They did it "heartily as unto the Lord."

This is what is needed still. In some measure it is to be seen already. So far as the great principle is concerned, it is now universally admitted that the gospel ought to be preached to all nations. Every church owns that it is by its very constitution from its great Head, a missionary institute. This is a happy change which has been effected within half a century. But while we are to be thankful for what has been done, much remains to be done. And there are especially two features in the great revival under Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel, which need to be copied by the churches of our day. One is that all should bear a part. No one kept back then. If so, it was noted and put down to their shame. It is said of certain nobles, "they did not put their neck to the work." This is just what is now needed. The work is large and needs a contribution to sustain it which a portion of the people are unable to furnish. But if each gave what he could, the burden would be light and the provision would be adequate. The other requirement is that all shall not only give, but work. There is a work which every one may do. He cannot roll it all over upon others. It would be good for himself as well as for the cause to take a personal part, little or much according to his circumstances, in the holy enterprise. In a word the great desideratum now is a sense of personal responsibility. It is that each and all shall know and do their part. And this the Spirit can accomplish now as of old in the rebuilding of the city and temple at Jerusalem.

4. Acting in the spirit and manner described, the people were enabled by the Spirit to overcome all opposition. They had formidable obstacles to encounter. The enemies were many, and powerful, and united. "The people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose." Misrepresentation of their design was forwarded to the highest and most influential quarters. Ridicule was poured upon them, "what do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." They were provoked to engage in contests and controversies. Worse than all the attacks of their enemies they had misunderstandings and disputes among themselves. "There was a great cry of the people and their wives against their bre-

thren the Jews." False friends endeavoured to entangle and deceive them. There was, in short, no opposition which they had not to meet, in every form and degree. But they did meet it nobly. This is perhaps the most remarkable feature, as it was the most difficult element in the whole proceeding. It required an amount of patient continuance in well doing which has not been often exemplified. The work occupied them, by its delays and distractions, for a whole century. Yet it was not abandoned. One was raised up after another to carry it on. And the history records an example of determined zeal worthy of all imitation.

This is an instructive lesson. We are taught what we are to expect if the Lord's work is to be done on the earth. It is no pastime. Men and devils will seek to hinder it. Here it will provoke ridicule and merriment, there wrath and persecution. Hindrances will come from enemies that are without, and greater from within. "Among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things." The work will take time. It cannot be done in a day. Years, generations, and centuries may elapse, but it must not be abandoned or relaxed. We may expect disappointments now, and then we are to look out for encouragements. Our mind must be made up to act upon the motto, "be ye therefore stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

5. To further the enterprise, and encourage themselves in it the Spirit disposed them to adopt special means adapted to all the emergencies in which they were placed. It is important to learn what they were.

At the very outset we find they devoted their substance with the utmost generosity to the work. It is said they offered freely for the house of God, and gave after their ability "unto the treasure of the work." Nehemiah bore a large part of the expense himself. By this means they showed their estimate of its importance. They were committed thoroughly to it. And they did that which was most acceptable to God.

The word of God was read during the progress of the work, publicly, statedly, and extensively. "They read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Ezra read, "from the morning until

mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand ; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." This was conduct worthy of those who wished to know their duty and to do it.

With the reading of the word, prayers were associated. "They assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day ; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God." They prayed that they might understand the word, and according as they perceived its meaning, they exercised themselves before God. They read the word in the spirit of obedience to it.

Particularly, they betook themselves to all those ordinances which they found from the word to be obligatory, but which had fallen into disuse. The feast of tabernacles was revived. They kept the passover with great solemnity. Thus both the word and ordinance were used to strengthen them for their great undertaking.

They bound themselves to God and one another in covenant. To make it more impressive and binding, they say—"we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it." They had put their hand to the plough, and were determined not to look back.

They set about a reformation of their whole conduct. Whatever they discovered to have been neglected they restored, whereinsoever they had transgressed, they corrected their deportment. Of the former there is an example in the scrupulous care to revive the celebration of the Sabbath, which had fallen into desecration. And of the latter there is an instance in the self-denial of separating themselves from the strange wives with whom in their ignorance and sin they had become allied.

Such was their conduct. These were men that must be expected to succeed. Their deportment was worthy of the cause in which they were embarked. They set a glorious example to the men of all times. If the work of the Lord is to be done, it must be by men such as these, and measures such as these. A large hearted liberality must open the hand. God's word must

be the directory in all we do. Earnest prayers must accompany the study of it. Divine ordinances must be employed to cherish the principles of piety. We must be heartily and unitedly devoted to the work. And there must be the utmost jealousy and care that our lives are in unison with our professions and engagements, so that in our own conduct we shall present a model of what we desire others, yea all, to be and to do. It is when we act thus we may expect that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in our hands."

6. The work at length was finished. The temple was completed, and "they kept the dedication of the house of God with joy." Also, "the wall was finished," so that even their enemies "perceived that this work was wrought of God." Its history stands a noble monument of what men can do under the mighty power and presiding wisdom of the Spirit of God. How appropriately does it all bear upon it the inscription of the text, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain,—and he shall bring forth the head-stone with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it."

So also shall it be with the higher work of which this is only a model: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Of this spiritual temple and its destined extent, there is an emblem in the vision of the prophet, when he saw "the stone, cut out of the mountain, without hands, grow and increase till it filled the whole earth." But in all that work two things shall be conspicuous. It will be accomplished by means of human agency, just by such men and measures as raised the fallen city and temple at Jerusalem; yet all that agency will be dependent for its efficacy on the accompanying grace of the Holy Spirit. Diligence and prayer are, therefore, the two great duties, deducible from this whole subject. We are to labour like Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah, as if all depended on our labour, and yet we are to pray as if all was suspended on our prayers. To labour and not pray is infidelity; to pray and not labour is presumption. It is the union of these two that constitutes the fitting instrument for the Lord's work. How beautifully are these very lessons taught in that psalm which was prepared and sung on the occasion of the work

which we have been describing. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." It is a song for all generations. It recognises the Lord as the only power by which the cause of truth and righteousness can be promoted or upheld in the earth, yet it requires the duty of diligent labour. The seed must be sown that the blessing may be given. As it is sown God the Spirit will bless it. Weeping over the desolation of sin, and throwing broadcast the seed of the gospel on the world, the Spirit will cause it to yield a harvest of universal holiness. And so on the glorious temple of a redeemed world, shall the inscription be read for ever, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,—the top stone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it."

Part II.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPELS TO THE
HOLY SPIRIT;

OR,

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN THE PERSON
AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

I.

The Work of the Spirit in the Conception of Christ.

“That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”—MAT. i. 20.

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—LUKE i. 35.



THE testimony to the Holy Spirit in the gospels, as might be expected, is more full and explicit than in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is distinguished by its close relation to the personal history of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is there eminently manifested as the Spirit of Christ. And it will be our aim, in this department of the subject, to trace the testimony chiefly as it is illustrative of the work of the Spirit in His person and ministry.

With this view our attention is naturally attracted, at the outset, by the order of both the narrative and the subject, to what has been properly designated, the miraculous conception of our Lord. It is miraculous, because the manner of His introduction to our world is altogether different from that of ordinary men, and because it was accomplished by the immediate agency of the Divine Spirit, exclusive of human interference. It is well expressed in one of our accredited standards, in these words,—“Christ the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.” These terms comprise the substance of the two texts which have been cited; “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;” and “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

What was the design of this miraculous conception? It was to provide a suitable Saviour for men. By means of this wondrous arrangement we are furnished with a Saviour, who is at once a Man, yet sinless, nay, perfect, and able to redeem a lost world. Let us endeavour to enter into these views, pursuing them in the order in which they have been expressed.

I. By the miraculous conception the Son of God became a man.

In this nature, the Redeemer was at first announced to our fallen progenitor—"the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." This was so far understood, that from the very beginning, a mighty deliverer was expected to be raised up among the children of men. It is manifest, from the brief record of the Scriptures, that Adam and Eve were continually looking out for His appearance, as their several children were born to them. "I have gotten the man from the Lord," was the exclamation of Eve on the birth of Cain. They discovered what has been natural to man, in all ages, an expectation of the immediate fulfilment of the divine promise. As time advanced, it was announced, the promised one should be of the seed of Abraham, and at a later period, that He should spring from the family of David. But all the prophecies made Him a partaker of human nature. He became eventually "the desire of all nations." But there was no exception to the belief, that this mighty One would be a man, of the same nature with his brethren; however, He might be distinguished by the grace and triumph of His mission to our earth.

When the Saviour did come, it was in the garb of humanity. He was born of a woman. Thus He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He passed through the ordinary stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood. He ate, slept, talked, and laboured, as other men. The eye, or the ear, or any other sense, could detect nothing wanting in His manhood. He was universally esteemed as a man among men. And when, shortly after His death, one of the first heresies appeared in the form of a denial of His humanity, it was instantly denounced by inspired authority. Out of a false regard to His honour, it began early to be taught, that His sufferings, and death, and manhood, were only apparent, and not real; but the unsound doctrine, however well intended, was at once strongly resisted by the express testi-

mony of the Spirit in the Scriptures, and the strongest language is used in its condemnation. John, the beloved apostle, who had lain on the bosom of his Master, and so long enjoyed His closest fellowship, thus lifted up the voice of indignant reproof, "beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God ; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God ; and this is that spirit of Anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now, already, is it in the world." The manhood of Christ was maintained as a fundamental and essential doctrine of the Christian faith.

There was good reason for its faithful and determined maintenance. The Apostle Paul argues its necessity, by irresistible reasons, in his Epistle to the Hebrews. "Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He then makes three quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures, to prove that this doctrine was maintained by them. And he adds, "forasmuch, then, as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death ; for verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels ; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham ; wherefore, in all things, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted ; He is able to succour them that are tempted." The apostle's argument proceeds on the assumption, that the purposes of our Lord's mission required Him to be a man. He must possess the nature of those on whose behalf He came into the world, otherwise the threatenings of God against it, if it should become sinful, would be falsified. He must die under the curse pronounced upon sinful men, and therefore, He must assume a nature capable of dying. His priesthood demanded not merely a nature that could be offered in sacrifice, but a sympathy with its sufferings, which experience alone could teach, and He became a man that He might learn in this school.

The inference is plain that, according to the Scriptures, unless He were a man He could not be the Saviour of men.

Is not this an overwhelming contemplation? The Apostle Paul gives us to understand it was the perception of this truth that inspired the strains of David in the eighth Psalm; "One in a certain place testified, saying, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest Him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedest Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet." And this passage he applies thus; "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." This is, indeed, an amazing expression of divine grace. The Son of God would save men. But to do so He must become a man, and He became a man. He must be a man, that He might sympathize, suffer, and die for men. And all this did not appal Him, or turn Him aside from His purpose. Truly, "grace hath reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord." We admire the missionary who goes to the savage, and lives after his customs, and learns his language, and gains his confidence, that he may save his soul. But what is this compared with the conduct of our Lord, "who, though He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Hence the miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost, that the Saviour might be a man.

II. This, however, is only a part of the truth. He might have been a man, though born by ordinary generation as other men. But if so born, He would, like them, have been sinful. Hence we proceed to observe that the miraculous conception was essential to His being born as a sinless and perfect man.

In the narrative of our Lord's assumption of human nature in the Scriptures, there is manifest the utmost carefulness to make it apparent, that while He was "the seed of the woman," and therefore a man, He was yet by the manner of His birth, kept

free from the taint of corruption, which attaches to all the children of men. This is the explanation of the amazing particularity with which the details of His birth are given in the divine word. God condescends to satisfy us, by giving us the history of Mary's betrothment to Joseph, of the suspicions excited in his mind, and of the manner in which these were removed. This godly man, jealous of his own and his wife's honour and purity, was satisfied, while on indubitable testimony it was announced to him, "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The very jealousy of Joseph is used, by the Spirit, as a testimony to the truth regarding the miraculous conception of the Saviour of men.

That which is thus so circumstantially related by the evangelists, is turned into a most interesting and powerful argument by the Apostle Paul, according to his usual manner. In the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, we read thus at the 26th verse; "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." He assumes that the Saviour of men must be free from sin; that He must not need to offer sacrifice for Himself; that He must not be subject to any sinful infirmity; and that in these respects, Christ stood a contrast to the priests of the law, and was absolutely without sin. His whole argument proceeds on the assumption of His personal innocence. Indeed, its necessity is self-evident. A sinner could not atone for his own sin, much less for the sins of others, of a whole world. He could not do more than it was his duty to do. The fact, that he has sinned, proves that he has fallen short of his duty. What then could he do meritoriously for either himself or others? Nothing. He must stand condemned before God. Innocence was essential to the work of atonement. This was prefigured by the arrangements of the law, that required the offerings to be the best of their kind. The lamb must be without spot or blemish. So must the priest be free from ceremonial defilement and physical infirmity. These institutes had their meaning and accomplishment in the absolute

innocence of Christ. Hence it is said of Him, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." This essential element of innocence existed in His case. Not that it alone would suffice. Other qualifications, to which we shall afterwards have reason to advert, were required and possessed by our Lord. An angel, though free from sin, could not have made an atonement for sin. One mere man, were he innocent, could not stand in the room of another. All we assert at present is that, so far as innocence was essential, our Lord was qualified to be the Saviour of men. And this was secured by the wondrous work of the Spirit of God in His miraculous conception.

Another and a higher end was at the same time gained. A perfect man was presented to the contemplation of men and angels. This the world had never seen. Adam was created in innocence, but he fell from his lofty eminence. It was of high moment that human nature should be seen in the perfection of holiness. This was exhibited in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the graces that could adorn humanity were found in Him. Nothing was wanting. Nothing was redundant. Nothing was out of place. There was in Him, both the highest elevation and the most complete harmony of character. His self-government never failed Him. His piety towards God always animated Him. And His benevolence to man never wearied. He exemplified His own principles, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength—and thy neighbour as thyself." He did so, and has left us a perfect example.

It is to the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit we are indebted for this innocence and perfection of the Saviour's humanity. An attempt has been made in our day to rob Him of this glory. Our ears have been made to tingle with the new heresy, "of the immaculate conception." The Church of Rome has announced the dogma that Mary had no sin. She did not think so herself, for she said, "my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." She needed a Saviour, and found Him in her son. This new doctrine is a fearful step in apostacy. It is contrary to the divine word. It exalts a sinful creature to a position occupied by none since the fall of Adam. It disqualifies the Son of God for the place He must occupy in order to save men.

He should be "the seed of the woman," and of such a woman as Eve was when Satan had prevailed upon her to violate her fidelity to God. And especially it concerns us to notice at present that it does despite to the Spirit of grace. He prepared a body for the Saviour in the womb of Mary, and so prepared it, that though she was a sinful woman, the child that was born of her was free from sin. The pure ray of light can penetrate the putrid mass, and yet not partake of its corruption; and so did the Holy Spirit cause the human nature of Jesus to proceed from the body of Mary, free from the taint of original sin. This is a great mystery. But without explaining the manner of it we must gratefully rest in the fact—"that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

III. One important view of this subject, however, yet remains. While the miraculous conception produced the sinless and perfect humanity of Christ, it did not destroy His divine nature. It remained in all its integrity, and therefore He was a Saviour as able as He was suitable to redeem a lost world.

There is a peculiarity in the inspired notices of this work of the Spirit which deserves special attention. In the prophecy of Isaiah vii. 14, it is written, "behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name, Immanuel." Immanuel! The evangelist, Matthew, after quoting the passage, and declaring that it was accomplished in the birth of Christ, explains the name Immanuel to signify, "God with us." The language of Luke is very striking; "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." All these passages imply that there was in Christ more than a mere humanity. He was a man, sinless and perfect, but He was more. He was the Son of God—He was God. The miraculous conception did not remove the divine while it produced the human nature. On the contrary, He was at once God and man. There were two natures in the one person. He stood forth a Mediator, "mighty to save."

This view of the Saviour's person pervades the New Testament. John says, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God—and the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Matthew asks, "if David call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" a question by which he designed to draw

attention to His two-fold nature. Paul sums up the doctrine, saying, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."

By this view of the Saviour's person we have a key to the interpretation of the Scriptures, which completely unlocks their treasures, and discovers their harmony. The Saviour is described now as a man, suffering and dying, then as God reigning and triumphing. The reconciliation is, that He was both, and there is no other solution of the difficulty.

A blessed solution it is. It reveals the very Saviour we need. "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." His suitableness and ability to save are alike, and at once manifested. He is all-sufficient. We need have no fear for ourselves or His cause. All are safe in His hand. For we may say with the prophet, "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." It is guaranteed and secured by the stupendous fact of the miraculous conception.

In conclusion, we cannot omit to notice how worthy is this doctrine of its gracious author. No other than He could have conceived such a plan to save sinners. None but He could have executed it. It is like all God's works, so simple, yet effective. The Son of God became the Son of man, and lo! a Saviour was born, of whom it was announced by a messenger from heaven; "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." He is at once our hope and our pattern. We are to build on His work and copy His life. In reference to both, we should "grow up into Him in all things." We cannot trust Him too implicitly, and we cannot imitate Him too closely. Let our habit be "looking unto Jesus."

And so may we be enabled to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Thus is the design of His miraculous conception answered.

II.

The Work of the Spirit in the Baptism of Christ.

"Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo! the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him."—MAT. iii. 16.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—LUKE iv. 18, 19.



THESE two passages refer to one event in the history of our Lord, His public designation to the ministry which He had undertaken, by the Holy Spirit. Hitherto, He had lived in obscurity. We have a few glimpses, but only a very few, of the childhood and youth of Christ, in the sacred narrative. We are informed, that in His infancy, His life was sought by Herod; that preserved by God, "He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man;" that He was "subject to His parents;" and that at least on one occasion He gave signal indication of His future greatness, when He was twelve years old, by His discussion with the doctors in the temple. But this is nearly all we know of the early life of Christ. There was a great work before Him, and He was preparing for it in the retirement of His obscure home. The silence that is observed respecting His youth is most instructive. It teaches us that the young should cultivate privacy; that they should avoid notoriety; that they should be engaged in diligent preparation for the active life of manhood; and that they should spend their youth with God, that they may be qualified to devote their maturity to His service. At length, however, the time of public duty came. Jesus would enter on His responsible ministry. This step was taken with deep solemnity. It is that which is set before us in the above passages. And in

their light we proceed to consider our Lord's designation to "the work which was given Him to do."

Confining our view to them, they teach us that our Lord was called to His ministry and qualified for it by the Spirit, that the Spirit set Him apart to it in the public ordinance of baptism, that He indicated the general nature and design of His ministry in descending upon Him at His baptism like a dove, and that these were still more fully enunciated by His own adoption of the prophetic words of Isaiah—"The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Let us endeavour to unfold these views.

I. Our Lord was called and set apart to His public ministry by the Holy Spirit.

This fact is abundantly confirmed by the history of the two passages before us. The first, in the 3d chapter of Matthew, is followed immediately by an account of our Lord's temptation, and no sooner is that ended than we find Him engaged in the public preaching of the word. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, He went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people." In the second, He justified His preaching of the word by quoting and appropriating the language of Isaiah. When He read it—"He began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." And on that assumption He proceeded to the work of public instruction, and so discharged it, by the grace of that Spirit which, He said, had anointed Him, that it is recorded—"All bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

There was much meaning in this fact, that our Lord was set apart to the ministry by the Holy Spirit. It implies that He had called Him to it, and qualified Him for it. He formed that body by the physical constitution of which Christ was capable of conversing with men. "A body hast thou prepared me"—"that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." He endowed

Him with those mental and moral qualities which were essential to the duty He had undertaken. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." He sustained Him in the arduous duties of His public ministry. "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." By Him He delivered His heavenly discourses. By Him He wrought His wonderful works. He said on one occasion—"If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." The ministry of Christ was one sustained exhibition of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

And what lessons of instruction are thus presented to us? We are forcibly reminded that the ministry of the word must still be supplied by the Spirit. "No man taketh this honour to himself, save he that is called of God, as was Aaron." "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These are the gifts of His Spirit, and the form in which they were imparted is thus described—"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." As the Spirit raises up the ministry, and calls it into the vineyard, so does He furnish and qualify it for its work. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Every ministerial grace and gift comes from the Spirit of God. Every duty must be discharged in dependence upon Him. All success comes from Him. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." When the

Spirit of the Lord lighted upon Christ visibly, and anointed Him for His public ministry, it was as a model to all future ages. It was designed alike for warning and encouragement—for warning, that none may presume to undertake the work of their own motion or in their own strength—and for encouragement, that none may fear to engage in the work when God calls them, assured that whomsoever the Spirit calls to it He will furnish for it.

II. It was in the ordinance of baptism that Christ was anointed by the Spirit, and set apart to His public ministry.

The history of the transaction, as given by the evangelist Matthew, is deeply interesting and instructive. We read at ver. 13—"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John to be baptised of him." It was of our Lord's own motion that He sought to be baptised. "But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" John was aware of Christ's dignity, and his words imply that not merely did he consider himself personally unworthy to administer the ordinance to Christ, but that he did not see why He needed to observe it at all. Surely the Son of God did not require a human ordinance. The answer of Christ is memorable. "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was necessary, in order that the whole law of God should be kept. Christ would omit no part of it, however trivial it might seem to be. In this, as in all things, He would set a perfect example. But is there not more? In the ordinance, Christ both desired and expected to be furnished with larger measures of the Divine Spirit, of which it was a significant emblem. It is clear this was obtained, as we learn from what follows:—"Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo! the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him! and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Spirit did come upon Him in the ordinance. This was no idle pageant. He came with a full hand. He conferred there and then His own gifts and graces upon the baptized Saviour. He was present both in the sign and the thing signified. And demonstration, both audible and visible, was given of the importance of the transaction. The heavens were opened, and the Spirit assumed a visible form in taking possession of Christ. And at

the same time a voice was heard, which proclaimed how acceptable the Son was to the Father in his present undertaking. Both the First and Third Persons of the Godhead bore testimony to the Second. There was an external exhibition of the Godhead as it concurred in the gracious work of saving a ruined world. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost appeared in union to accomplish that great consummation.

Let us see that we rightly understand the truths conveyed to us by this transaction. It does not teach that the Saviour had not previously been the depository of the Spirit. From the date of the miraculous conception, we may assume the Spirit never forsook His precious charge. Neither does it teach that the mere observance of the ordinance secured of necessity the accompanying grace of the Spirit. When Simon was baptised, the grace of the Spirit was withheld from him. Immediately afterwards, he discovered his real design in observing it. It was to serve his worldly ends. The Apostle, therefore, declared to him, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." But it does teach that the Spirit descended upon Christ in a copious effusion when He was baptized. He had observed it aright, "in spirit and in truth." It was, therefore, owned and honoured by that Spirit, of whose work it was an outward sign. When Jesus was baptised, He was anointed with the Spirit, and fully equipped for His blessed work. These are important principles, and both deserve and require to be carefully considered and distinctly apprehended by us. They illustrate the connection between the ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Spirit. It is not a necessary connection. The Spirit may be given without it. It is not to be administered to the man who has attained to the maturity of reason, unless he has previously given evidence that he is already under the influence of the Spirit. When the eunuch desired baptism of the evangelist Philip, he said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." If the ordinance is at any time observed without faith, the accompanying grace of the Spirit is not to be expected. Hence we observe that thousands and tens of thousands have been baptized, on whom, it is obvious from their lives, the Spirit has not been conferred. There is no other argument needed to prove that baptism is not regeneration than the fact of the abounding ungodliness in the baptized. Yet we must not undervalue the ordinance. There is in it a gracious,

though not a necessary, connection between the sign and the thing signified. When it is duly observed, it is owned and honoured. The Spirit is given where the prayer of faith is offered, and a corresponding fidelity is found in those who observe it. Nor is this peculiar to baptism. These remarks apply to all the ordinances. The preached word and the sacrament of the Supper may or may not be the channel of the Spirit to the souls of men. Especially we are reminded of the connection between the grace of the Spirit and the ordinance that still sets apart to the ministry of the Word. It is assumed that the act of ordination ought not to be observed toward any who have not given evidence that they have already been called to the work, and qualified for it by the Spirit. The command is, "Lay hands suddenly upon no man." When we do lay hands on any, it is our testimony to the Church that, after due examination, we believe the Spirit has been imparted. And yet in the ordinance we expect to be favoured with the outpouring of the Spirit. We seek Him in an enlarged measure. We ask Him to confer more and more abundantly the gifts and the graces required for the solemn duties that are undertaken. In this, as in all things, Christ is the model. As He was anointed by the Spirit when He was baptised, and entered on His public work, so do we desire and pray that His ministers shall be in like manner strengthened and stimulated for their holy calling. For this purpose, their ordination by the imposition of hands and prayer has been appointed, and continues to be observed. If observed aright, we are encouraged to expect such gracious results. If not so observed, it can only be offensive to God and injurious to man. The connection between the ordinance and the Spirit is not necessary, but gracious.

III. Not only, however, was the fact of the Spirit's descent upon Christ manifested in His baptism, He was so given as to intimate the design of His ministry, and this is what now remains to be considered.

A blessed design it is! And it is set forth, in the passage before us, both emblematically and in the plainest details of simple and impressive words. We shall consider it under both aspects.

1. Emblematically. "He saw the Spirit descending like a dove and lighting upon Him." It is unimportant to inquire whether the Spirit assumed the appearance of a dove, or whether it is only

meant that as a dove descended so did He upon Christ. The mention of the dove is sufficient to intimate that He was intended as a sign of our Lord's ministry. Truly it was an appropriate sign. He is the emblem of peace. From the day He bore the olive leaf to Noah in the ark, and acquainted him with the removal of the waters, He has been employed as the sign of peace and love among men. There is no doubt an appropriateness in the character of the dove to execute such a mission. And it was well chosen to be the outward sign in the baptism of our Lord. For what was the purpose of His ministry? Justly did the heavenly host cry aloud, as He was ushered into the world—"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will to men." He was eminently "the Prince of peace." "Christ is our peace." He causes us to be at peace with God, while He enables us to say—"Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He blesses us with peace, one with another, as it is written—"He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." And He gives us peace of conscience, according to His promise—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." Well might the Spirit of peace descend as a dove upon the Saviour, as He set Him apart to the public exercise of His ministry. He came with a message of peace from God to men.

2. More particularly, the design of our Lord's mission is presented in the words which He cited from the Prophet Isaiah. They were written for His use. O! how appropriate they are. "The Spirit hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor—to heal the broken hearted—to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The extremities of life are seized upon to represent the distresses of men; and they are so represented to show how the Prince of peace relieves them all. We can only name the many touching illustrations.

"To preach the gospel to the poor." Poor in every sense. Men were destitute of all things. Sin had stripped them of every earthly comfort, and left them without the hope of heaven. Jesus brought to them "unsearchable riches." By Him the

Spirit made them the subjects of godliness, and it "has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

"To heal the broken hearted." One of His first announcements was—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He assured them, when affected by a sense of sin, of a present pardon and a future joy. He gave them the Spirit, who had anointed Him to be their Comforter.

"To preach deliverance to the captives,"—the bond slaves of sin and Satan. He set them free from the guilt and dominion of the one as well as the slavery of the other. He assured them "if the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." And He taught them to say—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death."

"Recovering of sight to the blind." Literally and spiritually. He gave sight to the blind, and opened up to their vision the glories of creation. Better far, He enlightened the dark understanding, and enabled it to realize the spiritual glories of the invisible world—"to walk by faith and not by sight."

"To set at liberty them that are bruised." Not merely did he emancipate the slave, He healed the wounds which his fetters had inflicted upon him. He fulfilled the promise, "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," &c.—Isaiah lxi. 3.

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." To announce earth's jubilee. He proclaimed a kingdom to consist of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He conferred all the happiness of which man was capable here, and He promised "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven."

Such was the ministry on which Jesus entered when He was baptized, and the Spirit descended on Him as a dove. Was it not worthy of the Spirit and of the ordinance in which He anointed him?

Let us inquire, in conclusion, whether the design of this mission has been answered to us. How fearful if it should prove to any to be in vain! We have the Saviour, we have the ordinances that testify of Him, and we have the Spirit who renders them

effectual. Have they been effectual? Have we been baptized by the Spirit as well as by water? Have we thus been put in possession of the true riches? Have we received the consolations of the divine Spirit? Have we been emancipated from the guilt and practice of sin? Have we seen the glory of Christ? Have our spiritual diseases been healed? Have we learned to rejoice in the Lord? Take heed that you receive not the grace of God in vain. Be thankful for ordinances, but beware you do not rest in them. See that by the Spirit the gospel is made to you the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation—that thus you are “anointed of the Spirit.”

III.

The Work of the Spirit in the Temptation of Christ.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."—MATT. iv. 1.



HIS fact, in the history of our Lord, that He was led by the Spirit into His conflict with Satan in the wilderness, is repeated by both Mark and Luke. The three evangelists record it in the plainest and fullest manner ; thus testifying to its deep interest and importance. It is in accordance with the doctrine, conspicuously taught throughout the New Testament, that the people of God are constantly led by the Spirit, and that He accompanies them through the whole course which providence has assigned to them. Thus it is said of Simeon ; "the Holy Ghost was upon him, and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ ; and he came by the Spirit into the temple, when His parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law." The minutest steps in His history were ordered by the Spirit. So also is it said of Paul and Timothy ; "they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." How much more might it be expected that every step in our Lord's ministry would be guided by the Spirit ? And hence it is recorded in the text ; "He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

This fact is full of instruction. Let us inquire into its lessons. What were the purposes served by the temptation of Christ in the wilderness ?

1. It was, no doubt, the design of the Spirit, that His own work in the constitution of the Saviour's person should thus be tested and approved. He had formed His body by the miraculous conception, and brought Him into the world a perfect man. He had

set Him apart publicly at His baptism to the high ministry of redeeming a fallen world.' And He was willing, that at the outset, His full qualification for so great an undertaking should be tried by a desperate and deadly conflict with the prince of this world. So soon as our first parents were introduced to the fair creation which God had provided for them, the tempter began to lay his snares for them. Their innocence and happiness were regarded by him with intense malevolence. A fallen spirit himself, he desired to see them also ruined with him. His plans were well laid, they were cunningly executed, and alas! they were crowned with success. In the same spirit the wicked One watched the mission of the second Adam. No doubt he was apprised of his purpose to restore the ruins in which the world had been involved by the fall of the first. His enmity therefore would be increased toward him. Could he prevail against Him, not only would he retain his dominion over a fallen world, but he would gain a fresh triumph. Hence we can enter into the spirit and force of this first temptation in His public ministry. It was most cunningly planned, in its adaptation to the nature which the Son of God assumed. It was addressed to every peculiarity in His circumstances, which might create a point of weakness. It was prosecuted with the most unbroken and determined perseverance for a period of forty days and nights. And it was never abandoned until the full power and artifice of Satan were completely exhausted.

It is unnecessary to adduce the evidence of the Saviour's triumph. The history of the conflict is full and satisfactory. On every attack Satan was repulsed. In the end he withdrew in despair. But it is full of meaning and interest to observe the notice which the evangelist Luke takes of our Lord's conduct, immediately after the cessation of this first and fierce encounter. He says, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about." This implies, that He had fought and conquered in the power of the Spirit. It was thus His humanity was sustained in the deadly conflict. And in the exercise of the same power He then came as a Mighty Conqueror to His own proper work; and "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." Having vanquished the foe, for the present, He addressed Him-

self to the direct duties of His mission, and resolutely prosecuted them, knowing the enemy would soon rally and return.

This is a noble passage in our Lord's history. It is full of consolation. It reveals a Saviour equal to the great work He had undertaken. It discloses the Almighty power by which He conquered. It declared His superiority over Satan. It proved that our best friend is mightier than our worst foe. It manifested that greater is He who is for us than any who can be against us. And it was a good instalment of a mission thus described ; "the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the Devil."

2. By the temptation to which the Spirit conducted Christ, He, no doubt, designed to qualify Him still more for His gracious work, teaching Him to sympathise with His tempted people. A prominent place is given to this view of the subject, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage ; Wherefore, in all things, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." It is clearly testified of Christ that, under the pressure of strong temptation, He was deeply exercised. In one place Paul says of Him, "who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared ; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered ; and being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." Such exercises were in full harmony with the nature which He had assumed. By means of them it is declared He had been "made perfect." No doubt, He was, in a sense, always perfect. Yet He might advance to higher perfection. No sin ever attached to Him, yet He might grow in holiness. It is expressly stated He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." So under the pressure of His own trials He learned more

of the nature which He had assumed. He was better qualified to enter into the feelings of those who were clothed with the same. As has already been quoted, "in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

This subject of our Lord's sympathy is one of great interest to His people. In all the relations and conditions of life, we know the value of sympathy. It sustains in weakness, and comforts in sorrow. A kind word, a sympathetic look, a friendly act, is often as a fountain of water to a thirsty soul. And it is usually found that it is from those who have experienced sorrow themselves, these expressions of sympathy are to be expected. God said to Israel, "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Much, however, as human sympathy is esteemed, it is often powerless; and, though there is the will, there is not the power to help. How different with the sympathy of Christ! Its tenderness is infinite, and its power almighty. He said of Israel, "In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love, and in His pity, He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." The Apostle Paul says, in like manner, "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And on this he founds the exhortation, "Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Christ can deliver out of any trouble, and He will do so as far as it is for our good. Our confidence in His sympathy ought to be complete. We may say:—

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye.
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.
In ev'ry pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part;
He sympathises with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief."

3. By leading Christ to encounter temptation, the Spirit teaches all His followers what they also may expect. Life is a scene of temptation. All men are encompassed by it, converted

and unconverted. An inspired apostle speaks of the latter, saying, "If God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil who are led captive by him at his will." Satan leads the ungodly at his pleasure. But it is of the godly we now speak, and of their temptations. It is to them Christ is a model in this as in all things. Like Him, they may reckon on the peculiar enmity of the wicked one. Their entrance on a life of holiness is hateful to him, and he will endeavour to hinder it. It hence comes to pass that the power of temptation is often more keenly felt after conversion than before it. Before it, Satan had his prey and was content. But after it, the purpose to resist him is met by determined opposition. The man who swims with the stream finds it easy or agreeable; but when he turns against it and tries to stem it, he is made sensible of its force. Nor is this truth applicable to the Divine life merely in its general habits and exercises, but applies specially to every season of peculiar duty or enjoyment. It is with the servant as it is with his master. Observe, then, how it was with our Lord in the case before us. He had been publicly designated to His high and holy ministry. The Spirit had come upon Him as a dove, and the Father had approved Him by an audible voice from heaven. His soul was full of holy purpose. Probably His design in going up to the wilderness, immediately after His designation, was to seek a season of undisturbed meditation. But the Spirit had another design. "*Then* was he led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil." The Spirit knew that was an era in His history which the wicked one would not allow to pass without an assault upon Him. And the sequel proved how truly He had reckoned upon it. It is the same with His people. It was after Hezekiah enjoyed the signal tokens of the Divine favour in his recovery from sickness and the addition of fifteen years to his life, that he was tempted by the visit of ambassadors from the court of Babylon, and fell into the snare which Satan laid for his pride in the display of his treasures to them, and so provoked God to declare His judgments on the nation. It was immediately after Paul had "been caught up to the third heavens, and heard unspeakable words which it was impossible for a man to utter, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above mea-

sure." It is the law of the Spirit's providence to exercise the people of God with trials and temptations for their benefit. This is fully testified in His Word. "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The Apostle James even says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." The dispensation is worthy of the Spirit. It is distinguished by His unerring wisdom and infinite love. He deals with the servant as He did with his Lord, leading him into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, that His own work in him may be both tested and advanced.

4. In the special temptation by which Christ was beset, the Spirit so ordered it that there is much instruction and warning on the nature of the temptations which the people of Christ must encounter. It has been already remarked, they were singularly adapted to the human nature which Christ had assumed, and to the circumstances in which He was placed. This will be plain on the slightest notice that can be taken of them. They were three in number. The first was based on the fact that our Lord was suffering from hunger. Satan said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It was a temptation to distrust God—to have recourse to an unlawful method of supplying His necessities, which, it was insinuated, the necessity justified, while it would serve the purpose of proving the divinity of His mission. The second was the reverse of the first. In the one, Satan urged Him to escape out of a difficulty in a way that implied distrust of God. In the other, he urged Him to presumption. He "set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." By so acting, He would give God an opportunity to fulfil His promise. The third was more subtle still. It was addressed to pride, the grand weakness of human nature. "He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of

them, and said, All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." It would have been impossible to devise a scheme more fitted to be successful. By it, as Satan prevailed against our first parents, he hoped to overthrow our Lord. But He could say, "The Prince of the World cometh, and hath nothing in me." All passed over Him and left Him unscathed. Alas, how different it is with His followers. The same temptations are used against them. Satan plies them with them in all ages. They are exemplified in our Lord, that we may be on our guard against them. Distrust in danger and difficulty, presumption in prosperity, and pride at all times, are the three weak points at which we may expect to find the fiery darts of Satan at all times hurled. Let us be watchful against them. The Spirit knows what is in man, and where his danger lies, and He has raised a beacon for us in the life of Christ, and especially in the history of His great temptation, to which we have much need, as well as encouragement, to attend. For this purpose, as well as others, He led the Saviour into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.

5. At the same time, we are farther taught by this most instructive providence of the Spirit, in what manner the temptation of Satan is to be met and overcome. Special notice is taken of the reply given by our Lord in the case of every temptation. Each was met by a passage from the Divine Word. When tempted to distrust, He replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When tempted to presumption, he replied, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." And when tempted to pride, He answered, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Every quotation He prefaced by the words, "It is written." What a comment on the truth that "the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God." This was the weapon which He put into the Saviour's hand. Even He could not, or would not, conquer by any other. And it is well to observe how this same principle is recognised in the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, when he warns us against the wiles of the wicked one, and teaches us how they are to be withstood. To Christian soldiers he says, when describing the armour in which they must be clothed, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And what

is the shield of faith but the expert use of the Divine Word? So also Peter exhorts—"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the faith." And what is it to be stedfast in the faith, but to cleave determinedly to the Divine testimony in the word? Believe it, and act upon it as Christ did, and ye shall be safe. Remember its examples and counsels, for both warning and encouragement; and, following them, you shall maintain your integrity. You will find the description of David true, when he says of the righteous man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

6. Finally, let a word be added on the blessed consequence of our Lord's resistance to Satan. "Then the Devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." A double blessing! The Devil left Him, and angels came to Him. So it is still. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." Just as the temptations of Satan are indulged, so will he increase both his demand and his power. On the other hand, as he is withstood and conquered, his influence is weakened. In the habit of a close walk with God, lies the greatest security of deliverance from the wicked one. Jacob took leave of Laban with solemn exercises of sacrifice, and appeals to the divine presence. And observe what is immediately added, "he went on his way and the angels of God met him. And when he saw them he said this is God's host." He was safe in their company. So it is yet. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Let Satan dwell with us, and they depart. Let Satan be cast off, and they will be our companions. Of us as of Christ it will be told, "then the Devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

IV.

The Work of the Spirit in the Public Life and Ministry of Christ.

"Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust."—MATT. xii. 18-21.



HE personal character and ministry of Christ, as these were formed by the Spirit, constitute the subject of this passage. These two, His character and ministry, are placed together, because they are not only closely associated and powerfully influence one another, but because they perfectly harmonize in their spirit and pursuits. It must be so in all similar cases. Among men it is private character that determines public duties. An humble man conducts the service allotted to him in unobtrusive diligence. A vain-glorious man proclaims in unmistakeable terms, by his ostentatious proceedings, "come, see my zeal." The one prosecutes his work, and desires only to be able to say to him who has called him to it, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." The other seeks to attract attention to himself, and is disappointed if his labours do not extend his own interest or fame. In this respect, as in all others, the example of Christ is perfect. He presents the model, in His Spirit and practice, to which all His followers should seek to be conformed.

Before proceeding to consider it, let it be noticed, how distinctly the formation of Christ's character and ministry is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In the text God says, "I will put My Spirit upon Him," and to this is attributed all He was and did. The

Spirit rested upon Him as His chosen dwelling-place, and so He was ever filled with His hallowed influence. As John has expressed it, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him."

Let us then inquire into the character thus formed in Christ, as it is presented in the passage before us, and of which the leading features are too plain to be misapprehended. 1. There is the personal deportment of Christ, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." 2. We have the prosecution of His ministry in a spirit and manner becoming His own personal character, "a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." 3. There is special notice of the acceptance of such service in the sight of God, "behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased." And 4. We are assured of His final and complete success, "He shall show judgment to the Gentiles, in His name shall the Gentiles trust."

I. The personal deportment of Christ, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets."

This statement is fully borne out by the whole of His personal history.

His entrance into the present life was in full harmony with it. He was born in poverty. There was nothing in His outward circumstances to attract observation. The heavenly world, we know, was deeply moved by it, but there was no excitement on the earth. He rose like the great luminary of day, silently, gradually, and unobserved, while the nations lay fast asleep in ignorance and sin.

When He did appear among men He employed no earthly weapons to prosecute His cause and establish His kingdom. He came as the Prince of peace. He exemplified the great principles on which He afterwards sent forth His apostles to advance His truth, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual."

Our knowledge of the life of Christ will readily suggest the means employed by Him. We may appeal to that knowledge whether they were not such as the following. Deep exercises of personal *devotion*. These lay at the foundation of all He did. "In the morning, rising up early, a great while before day, He

went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." This was His habit. He, therefore, ever walked among men as one who felt He was Himself walking with God. Great *diligence*. After His long-continued secret devotions, often spending the whole night in prayer, in some deep seclusion far away from the haunts of men, He would be found in the temple early in the morning, teaching the people. "He preached in the synagogues throughout all Galilee." On one occasion we find Him saying to the Apostles, "Come into a desert place and rest awhile, for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." In all these labours there was burning *zeal*. He forgot Himself. When His disciples, in sympathy, "prayed Him, saying, Master, eat," He said unto them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of—My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He might say, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." Yet in its deepest earnestness there was no noisy clamour. "He said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there!" His zeal poured forth its energies as the deep and silent river, not as the bubbling, noisy stream. There was the most unobtrusive *gentleness*, united with the most untiring activity. As much was accomplished by His actions as by His words. His example was the best comment on His instructions. While "He spake as never man spake," He went in and out among men so as to captivate all who knew Him. He was loved more than feared. His *beneficence* constrained those who witnessed it to say, "He hath done all things well; He maketh the blind to see and the deaf to hear." And He consummated all by the most uncomplaining *patience*. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Taking His whole life into view, it may be regarded as a perfect exemplification and full embodiment of the work of the Spirit as described by the Apostle Paul—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

II. The public ministry of Christ was conducted in a spirit and manner fully harmonising with His personal deportment. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory."

The manner in which He commenced His work gave fitting intimation of what might be expected in its progress. His beneficent miracles had attracted multitudes to Him. We are told "there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond Jordan." They were ready to do whatever He commanded them. They would make Him a king if He would only consent. They were in expectation of a mighty deliverer from their oppressors, and they were burning to follow His standard as the promised Prince. To such a multitude He lifted His voice, and what had He to say? O! how contrary to what they expected or desired. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, they which are persecuted for righteousness sake." How such doctrines must have fallen on the ears of that multitude. It was contrary to everything they expected or desired. He endangered His popularity not a little. They longed for a leader who would marshal the armies of Israel and lead them to victory. But He gave them to understand they would find none such in Him. It was the minds of men He sought to govern, and not their bodies merely. He would teach them to govern themselves and rule their own spirits, rather than seek to triumph over others. He would make them holy, in order that they might be happy. He would emancipate them from sin, and self, and Satan, and the world, and train them for glory, and honour, and immortality in a life beyond death and the grave. No wonder that, with their expectations and prepossessions, they said, "We have seen strange things to-day."

Even in the performance of His miracles, the same spirit is habitually manifested. Again and again, as He did some work of mercy, feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked, or giving sight to the blind, or hearing to the deaf, or health to the sick, He would say, "See that thou tell no man." This charge recurs, indeed, with a frequency that shows the vast importance He attached to it. It surprised His disciples. They said to Him on one occasion, "Go into Judea, that Thy disciples may also see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou doest these things, show Thyself to the world." It is, in-

deed, a question of much interest and importance, Why did our Lord so constantly forbid that His beneficent miracles should be spoken of? It is sometimes said, the reason was that the time was not yet come for His manifestation. Other explanations have been given also. Perhaps, however, the grand, if not the only, reason was, to set an example and teach a lesson of humility. Jesus knew well how prone men are to ostentation. He knew that even their kindest actions are often influenced by a love of display. If they do not proceed from it, they may not yet be altogether free from it. And, therefore, He took the opportunity constantly to reiterate the command, in the case of His own deeds of benevolence, "See that no man know it."

How completely in character with this spirit was His habitual treatment of His own followers. They appear to us singularly stupid, and self-willed, and rebellious. Look at Peter, resisting Him when He told him of His approaching death, and afterwards denying Him when He was arrested. Look at James and John begging for a place of honour and emolument in the earthly kingdom which they fancied and hoped He was about to establish. See how they all forsook Him and fled when His hour of trial came. Even after His death and resurrection, see how He had to say to them, "O, fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Yet how did He treat them under all these provocations? He bore with them, with their ignorance, and selfishness, and foolishness, and pride, and worldliness. He said and did nothing to discourage or injure the work that had been begun, however feebly, in their minds. He avoided every word that might prove a temptation or trouble to their weakness. "The bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench, till He sent forth judgment unto victory" in the more full effusion of His Spirit upon them in due time. (Mat. xxvi. 26—46; ver. 40, 41, 45.)

Observe also how He dealt with every inquirer. Take the example of Nicodemus. He came by night, afraid or ashamed to be seen in His company. Yet He does not repel him. He is ready to hear all his questions, resolve all his doubts, remove all his objections, and instruct him fully and patiently in the true doctrine. In like manner did He deal with all others who were brought into contact with Him. He avoided every word and abstained from every act that would needlessly offend their pre-

judices, or excite their passions, or alarm their fears, or in any way endanger their edification. We do truly behold verified in Him the ancient prophecy, "He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." "He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

His enemies also were treated in the same spirit. When in going up to Jerusalem, He once sent messengers before Him to prepare a place for Him in a city of the Samaritans, they refused to receive Him. Provoked by their want of hospitality, James and John proposed to call down fire from heaven and consume them. "But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." If they would not receive good at their hands, they must do them no evil. He exemplified the lesson of His own apostle, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." He would in no sense or manner "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax."

Such were the personal character and public ministry of Christ. Let us now notice—

III. How acceptable they were in the sight of God. It is written, "behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased."

This language is strong. "My servant, My chosen, My beloved, My soul is well pleased." In the prophecy from which these words are quoted the terms are even stronger, "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." Taking the whole context into view, it is manifest the Father's approval of Christ, and His delight in Him, arose not merely out of the mission which He had undertaken, and which was most acceptable in His sight, but also out of His personal character, and the Spirit that characterized His ministry. God declares His delight in those unobtrusive graces and hidden acquirements that adorned the person of His Son. Nor is this a solitary testimony to the same purpose. In the Epistle of Peter, he speaks "of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," and says, that "in the sight of God it is of great price." There is something in the very manner of His statement to make it peculiarly impressive. He assumes its truth. "A

meek and quiet spirit, which (without question, or explanation, or reason assigned,) is in the sight of God of great price."

There is good reason why it should be so. And it may be profitable to refer for a little to it.

Such a spirit is in reality a difficult and high attainment. It is one that must be maintained, simply by a reference to God, and derives no nourishment from the soil of either the human heart, or the world. There are some graces, as they are counted, that may be greatly encouraged, if they do not spring from our own selfishness, or the spirit of the world. Self-righteousness or applause may cherish if they do not cause them. It is thus much easier to do the will of God than to bear it. In doing it, we may be cheered on by the congratulations of our fellow-creatures; but in bearing it we can appeal only to the heart-searching God. The bravery of the battlefield is a small attainment compared with the mastery over our own spirit. It is easier to die amid heaps of slain than bear in silence the unprovoked injury. It would be a far easier and lower attainment, to catch the spirit, and imitate the example of a mighty conqueror in the open field of the world, than of the Lord Jesus in the private walks of His unseen benevolence, and the earnest pleadings of His midnight prayers. It is thus God judges. And hence "His approval of Christ, and the unobtrusive graces that adorned Him, as well as of all His followers, who seek conformity to Him, desiring His favour rather than the applause of men.

In this "meek and quiet spirit," there is in reality the highest excellence. Observe how our Lord recommends its culture in the discharge of the most ordinary duties. "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." "When thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." The tiny flower that escapes the eye of the unobservant traveller is often found to discover the loveliest tints and the most exquisite organisation when subjected to the narrow investigation of the exploring

microscope. And so the most excellent of the graces need to be discovered by a close inspection of the character in which they dwell. Thus Christ was shown to those who understood Him. He grew up a "tender plant," yet "without form, or comeliness, or any beauty, wherefore the world should desire Him."

It is in the cultivation of such graces we approach nearest to the works of God. Who sees His hand in sending out the sun that shines upon us, or the dew that refreshes the earth, or the water that fills its fountains, or the fruitfulness that covers its valleys and hills? The works are manifest, but the hand that performs them is unseen. So hidden it is, and so secret its operation, that many in the enjoyment of the gifts do not discover, or perhaps may deny, the Giver. Surely we may well believe that in seeking conformity to Him, after the example of His own Son, we shall be most acceptable with Him, for His sake. More need not be said to recommend the value of the unobtrusive graces. Let me only exhort you to their cultivation by noticing—

IV. The final and complete success of Christ in His ministry of meek and gentle benevolence. "He shall show judgment to the Gentiles—and in His name shall the Gentiles trust."

This is a view of the way in which religion should progress, on which our Lord delighted to dwell. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the fowls of the air come and lodge in the branches of it." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." Thus silently, secretly, but surely, should pure and undefiled religion progress until it covered the whole earth.

The most careful observation will fully confirm the views of Christ. Take the secret exercises of the man of prayer in his closet, or the unknown instructions of the parent in his family, or the unobserved toils of the Sabbath-school teacher in his class, or the unostentatious labours of the pastor in the pulpit or his parish, and you discern the real influences that are leavening society and preparing a people for the Lord.

It is the same on the widest scale of human effort and benevolence. Who or what are spreading abroad light, and truth,

and love, and holiness, and happiness? Not the men nor the measures that are attracting all eyes and producing startling changes, but the seed of the word sown by the silent page of the Scriptures, or the self-denying toils of the missionary, or the godly converse of the people of God scattered abroad over the nations of the earth. These are undermining the foundation of superstition, idolatry, and sin. They are laying firm and deep the foundations of Jehovah's temple in the earth. They will in the end secure the blessed consummation so sweetly sung by David—"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth; His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed. And blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen."

In conclusion, let us see that our practices are conformed to these views.

Let it be so in our personal religion. There must be more of heart-work and closet-work before we can rise to the stature of the perfect man in Christ. True godliness flourishes more in the shade of the valley of humiliation than in the sunshine of the elevated heights of the world.

Let it be so in any labours which we undertake or prosecute for the good and instruction of others. The more secret and unobserved they are the better. What a field there is in the dark lanes and unknown habitations and forsaken hearths or sick beds of the poor!

Let it be so in all our expectations of the final triumph of those public institutions which are labouring for the elevation and redemption of the world. We are not to be dependent for encouragement on striking examples of success, or sudden changes and revolutions. Their strength lieth in the persevering, patient, and self-denied labours of those whom they employ abroad; and not less on the secret, earnest, and importunate prayers, as well as the generous contributions, of those by whom they are sustained at home. It is in the personal character and ministry of Christ we have a model of the efficient agency by which the world shall be at length subdued unto Him.

V.

Christ casting out Devils by the Spirit.

"If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."—MATT. xii. 28.

THE Holy Spirit was the Creator of the man Christ Jesus. He endowed Him with a true body and a reasonable soul, so that when He appeared among men it was as "God manifest in the flesh"—able as He was fitted to occupy the place of the Saviour of men. It was by the Holy Spirit He was publicly designated to His work. This was done in the ordinance of baptism, administered by John the Baptist. And while Christ was anointed by the Spirit, who descended upon Him as a dove, the Father publicly acknowledged and honoured Him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Both His person and undertaking were most acceptable in the sight of Jehovah. It was the Spirit who formed His personal character and sustained Him through His whole ministry. And these were so constituted and owned as to pour contempt on human pride and wisdom. He came "meek and lowly," yet was He the mightiest of conquerors. "His gentleness made Him great." In a life of the utmost simplicity, and the farthest possible distance from ostentation, He laid the foundation of the world's deliverance from all evil, and its preparation for the highest elevation in time and its blessedness in eternity. All these views we have had opportunity to consider at length, and now proceeding from what is general to one particular feature in our Lord's ministry, we turn to the announcement of the text—"If I cast out devils by the Spirit, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

There are three important views in these words ; the fact of demoniacal possession ; the assumption that Christ cast out Devils by the Spirit of God ; and the inference drawn from it,

that the kingdom of God was thus shown to have come. Let us follow out these three ideas.

I. The possession of men by Satanic agency is assumed as an indisputable fact.

Such was the popular belief in our Lord's day, and He never uses a word to discountenance it, but on the contrary, habitually confirms it. Every one who reads the gospel narrative with a simple and unsophisticated mind, accords with the prevalent belief of the Jews. It is only by the torture of an ingenious criticism that the doctrine can be evaded. To understand the scripture accounts of demoniacal possession, as only allegorical descriptions of bodily or mental diseases, or of both combined, is forced and unnatural. Nor is it less unsafe and unsound. The scriptures are the plainest of all writings. The sense in which they are understood by the most simple and unlettered reader is the most likely to be true. We are never to depart from the most literal and plain interpretation, unless reason can be given to prove its necessity. And on this ground we cannot hesitate to acquiesce in the assumed fact of the text.

Not that we are unwilling or afraid to appeal to the strictest criticism. If fairly conducted it will lead us to the same conclusion. Let us exemplify this remark, by referring to Matthew iv. 24, in which place it is thus written, "His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with Devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them." It is observable, that "those possessed with Devils" are enumerated as distinct from those who were afflicted with either bodily or mental maladies. It is not without design that this feature occurs in the divine narrative. It is not a mere tautology. It is the strongest of all arguments, because it is incidental, to prove that demoniacal possession was taken for granted by the author of the Scriptures. It would be impossible otherwise to interpret their repeated narratives of such cases. To take another example, let us look at the miracle in Luke viii. 26, 33. A demoniac, whose name was Legion, encountered the Saviour. Astonishing to relate! he knew Him, and cried, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God, most High? I beseech Thee, torment me not."

The Devils, by whom he was possessed, felt their subjection to Christ, and requested that He would "not command them to go out into the deep." He granted the request, so far as to suffer them to "go into a herd of swine that were feeding on the mountain." No sooner, however, had they done so, than "the swine ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked." By what force of interpretation could this transference of the devils from the man to the swine be understood, of either bodily or mental diseases? Whatever difficulties may attach to the literal interpretation, there are certainly many more, and much greater to the allegorical. It is alike safe and reasonable to abide by the plain unsophisticated meaning, and reject the mystical and unnatural.

We say advisedly it is reasonable. For if the case be fairly considered, what is there unreasonable to prejudice this view of it? Its essence lies in the influence upon our minds, and through them on our bodies, exercised by fallen spirits. Now, we do not hesitate to admit the influence of one spiritual being upon another. Nor do we doubt that, because one of these possesses a human body, he is incapable of being affected by the other. The Holy Spirit operates on our minds. It is testified of the holy angels, that "they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." If the great Spirit and the good spirits can influence us, why shall we deny that the evil Spirit and his legions also may not influence us? Such a supposition is as contrary to sound reason as it is to the sound interpretation of the divine word. It is a fancy evoked by the wicked one, that under its deceptions he may the better practise his wiles on the children of men.

It may be asked, was not the demoniacal possession of our Lord's time very different from anything which we now witness? We are ready to admit it was so, but we hold there was a reason for it. It is clear the purpose of our Lord's mission was well known to Satan, and that he used the utmost efforts to defeat it. It pleased God to allow him the utmost extent of his power and malice against His Son. Hence said Jesus, "this is your hour and the power of darkness." Time and opportunity were given to Satan and all his servants on earth or in hell, to do their worst against Him. Among other forms of opposition they were allowed to possess the bodies and minds of men. This was per-

mitted that the triumph of Christ over them might be the more marked and complete. This sufficiently accounts for the peculiar manifestation of Satan in the days of Christ upon the earth. And it is well fitted to call forth our liveliest gratitude. For it furnishes us with a singular proof of the sufficiency of the Saviour, and demonstrates His ability to overthrow the wicked one in all his attempts upon the destruction of either Himself or His people.

Nor can we pass from this part of the subject, without noticing that in the experience of men to the present time, there is found something corresponding to the peculiar enmity of Satan, as it was discovered in the time of our Lord. It is expressly stated in the book of the Revelation, "the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." The meaning is, there were signs that Christ was at length about to take His kingdom, and reign on earth. By these Satan was enraged, and put forth all his power, though it was impotent to resist him. So whenever a soul is exercised by the Spirit, and seeks to return in allegiance to God, it must encounter the peculiar resistance of the wicked one. Temptations, and obstacles, and difficulties, will be raised up that never appeared before. And it is only through Sovereign and Almighty grace the awakened soul can attain to the triumph of salvation. Blessed be God, there is a power to meet this emergency, as will now appear while we proceed to consider.—

II. Christ cast out devils by the Spirit of God.

There is a fulness of evidence on this subject in the Scriptures and in the history of Christ as there narrated, which it is important to notice.

The text itself is peculiar—"If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils." Our Lord takes it for granted He did so. Those who heard Him were eye and ear witnesses that the devils were cast out. They never doubted it. But Christ assumes it was equally undoubted that this power was exercised by Him as derived from the Spirit. It was not more true and manifest that He cast out devils, than that He did so by the Spirit.

The evidence of these two statements is greatly accumulated in the history of the expulsion of the devils, as this is given in the Gospel narrative. The number of cases recorded is very large. They present the greatest variety of features. In not a single

instance did the power of Christ fail Him. His was a continuous victory. In every instance He triumphed over the wicked one. And thus every fresh case of demoniacal possession yielded a fresh proof that Christ was able to save to the uttermost.

We refer to a few of the manifested trophies of Christ, and particularly to their connection with the work of the Spirit in His ministry.

It commenced under a most violent assault of Satan. For forty days and nights He had to endure his enmity in the wilderness. Temptation, under the most deceitful and powerful forms, was presented to Him. Yet we are told "the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil." If He led Him to the contest, we may readily believe He abode with Him in it. The narrative is so constructed as to bring out forcibly the doctrine of our Lord in the text that it was by the Spirit He cast out devils.

An examination of every instance in which our Lord is represented to have triumphed in the same manner would lead us to a similar conclusion. But we confine ourselves to the single one before us. Observe how Christ reasons. We read in ver. 24, "The Pharisees said, This Fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." To this Jesus replied, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself cannot stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall, then, his kingdom stand." Then He adds, "If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you." He places the Spirit in opposition to Satan, to whom the Pharisees ascribed His power. And He does it in a way that gives force and prominence to the work of the Spirit in His miracles.

Observe also the account that is given of His death and resurrection. His death was the great evidence of His humiliation, and His resurrection of the triumph achieved by it. It is expressly stated by the Apostle Paul, "Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." But how did He manifest and prove this victory in His resurrection? Our Lord says, in a discourse in which He anticipates both His own death and resurrection, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." And the Apostle Peter refers to the same subject when he says, "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." The

same prominence is given to the Spirit in His death and resurrection as has already been noticed in His ministry. "Through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God," and by the same power "He entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The very same feature is noticeable in the account of His ascension. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." These gifts are interpreted of the Spirit, for it is added, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." And we know it is by the Spirit He dwells with men.

And we may add the triumphs which have followed His death, and resurrection, and ascension. They are directly ascribed to the Spirit. Witness the proceedings of the day of Pentecost. They were all ordered to bring out this one great truth—the connection of the Spirit with the work and triumph of Christ, "This is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel, It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."

Why is it that the whole history of Christ is thus identified with the Spirit? It cannot be without design. There are many important lessons which it is meant to convey to us. It shows us that the restoration of human nature to its original perfection is committed to the Spirit. He has given us a model of what He can and will do, in the character and history of our blessed Lord. It is intended to exhibit to us the concurrence of the Spirit in the redemption of sinners. Whatever Christ did toward that end, He sanctioned and furthered—whether it was His assumption of our nature, or the life He spent in it, or His death, or resurrection, or ascension. It is fitted to teach us by what power the triumphs of holiness over sin must at all times be achieved. Even Christ is seen to have done all by the Spirit. How impressively it reminds us that we can do nothing without Him, but that by Him we may attempt anything. It is, in short, an illustrative exhibition of our high privilege in being placed under "the ministration of the Spirit," of whom Jesus testified, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

How interesting, in connection with these views, it is to notice the revelation that is given of Jesus in the glory of His exalta-

tion. "I beheld," says John, "and, lo! in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." With Him is the residue of the Spirit. He may be contemplated still crying, as He did in the days of His flesh, "If any man thirst, let Him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Even as of old does Christ "cast out devils by the Spirit of God." This, however, will come more properly under consideration while we consider —

III. The inference drawn by Christ from this fact, namely, that "the kingdom of God is come unto us."

The connection is apparent, that the casting out of devils by the Spirit in the ministry of Christ was evidence that the kingdom of God was about to be set up among men.

Of this sentiment there is a fine illustration in the language of our Lord, following the text—"Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house." The strong man was Satan. The house occupied by him was the human heart. Jesus bound this strong man. Of this He gave signal and satisfactory proof in casting out devils. It was thus made plain that "the Son of Man was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil." In their room He would set up the kingdom of God in the hearts and lives of men.

What is this kingdom? It is explained by our Lord, saying, "It cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo, here! or lo, there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." The Apostle Paul has described it thus:—"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is very observable how, in both these passages, we have first the negative, and then the positive. We are told what the kingdom of God is not, and what it is. This is to meet a propensity of human nature to place it in that in which it does not consist. We are prone to make it an external ceremony—something attractive to the outward sense of man. But we must remember its seat is in the heart. It is thence all its influences must go forth." He is not a Jew

which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new."

The nature of this kingdom may readily be perceived from the character of Him by whom it is set up. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. What, then, must that work be ? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." He sets up Christ on the throne of the heart, and He makes all the powers, and passions, and propensities of the mind subject to Him. He causes it to say, "O Lord, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." His people yield themselves unreservedly to Him, to be, or to do, or to suffer as He may appoint or require. And it is just as this is done the kingdom of God may be said to have come to them.

What encouragement there is to expect the establishment of this kingdom in our hearts and lives, from what we have seen of His power in the casting out of devils by the Spirit ! None could withstand Him then ; and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Every form of demoniacal possession gave way before Him in the days of His flesh, and so must every iniquity yield to His influence now. He can cast out every evil passion, and He can implant every gracious affection. He can enable us both to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." He can overcome our propensity to evil, and substitute the desire to do good. This is the blessed doctrine conveyed to us by our Lord in the text.

Nor must we limit it to any spiritual influence over the individual minds of those who constitute His Church. That Church shall be a kingdom in the highest and widest acceptation. "The stone cut out of the mountains without hands shall grow and increase until it fill the whole earth." Christianity will be dominant in the earth. It will one day rule on every throne. It will preside in every hall of judgment. It will guide in all national counsels. It will still the tumults of the people. It will banish sin and sorrow. It will establish truth and righteousness. In Christ "all nations shall be blessed, and all na-

tions shall call Him blessed." Of all this we have the sure prognostic in the announcement of the text—"If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you."

In conclusion, let me remind you of one instance in which this power was exercised by our Lord with its lesson as taught by Himself. It is recorded by Matthew xvii. 14—21. The disciples had failed to cure one who was lunatic and sore vexed, and his afflicted father applied to Christ. He healed him. The disciples afterwards asked, "Why could not we cast him out?" Remember the memorable answer, "Because of your unbelief." And then He farther taught them, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Would you have Satan cast out by the Spirit of Christ? Here is the way: by faith, and prayer, and fasting. Cultivate these graces, and rest assured "the kingdom of God will come unto you."

VI.

The Sin against the Holy Ghost.

“Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—MATT. xii. 32.



ENTERING on the subject of these words, it is important to notice the very solemn manner in which it is introduced to our attention. Our Lord is the speaker, and there is a reiteration of sentiments and words which, proceeding from Him, may well arrest and impress us. “I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” We cannot wonder if these solemn words of Jesus Christ have excited an unusual share of interest in the minds of men. To many they have been the cause of great alarm and anxiety. Not a few, in the commencement of the divine life especially, have been much exercised by them. To some they have been a heavy burthen all their days. Yet they were uttered by Him who would “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” He pronounced them as “the faithful and true witness.” It was in love He did so. He is no friend to man who prophesieth smooth things. It is well to know the truth. Let us, therefore, give our earnest attention to our Lord’s warning voice, considering, 1, Wherein the sin against the Holy Ghost consists, and 2, Why it is unpardonable. May He of whom we speak be our divine and effectual teacher!

I. What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?

It will guide us much in this inquiry, if we carefully observe the circumstances in which Christ delivered the sentiment of the text, as these are detailed in the context. He had performed a notable miracle, as we read in verse 22, healing a man who had been "possessed of a devil, blind, and dumb." The people were greatly impressed by what they had witnessed, and naturally inquired, "is not this the Son of David?" The Pharisees were filled with envy and alarm, and while they did not and could not deny the miracle, they accounted for it by ascribing it to the power of Satan, making it an argument against His mission instead of a proof of its divinity. Our Lord defended Himself, by a train of reasoning, which reduced the argument of His opponents to an absurdity. Would Satan cast out Satan? If so, he would be the destroyer of his own kingdom. No, the miracle proceeded from a very different source. It was performed by Him through the power of the Spirit. And therefore, instead of furnishing a proof that He was in collusion with the Devil and his angels, it was, on the contrary, a proof that the kingdom of God was come unto them. Then He uttered the language of the text. You, Pharisees, have ascribed the work of the Spirit to the wicked one. What He did to prove the divinity of Christ's person and mission, you turn into an argument to show that He was an impostor, and actuated by Satanic agency. Thus your sin consists in the unreasonable and absurd rejection of the Son of God as the Saviour of men, in opposition to the plain and unanswerable testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is the historical interpretation of the sin furnished by the details of the passage, and keeping it before us as our guide, we may be much helped to perceive what are the essential features which enter into its nature.

1. Its basis consists in the rejection of the truth. This is a special offence to the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of truth, and the rejection of His testimony is tantamount to a charge of falsehood against Himself. This testimony is given in the inspired word. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." He raised them up, qualified them, instructed them, and what they delivered He delivered by them. He could say, "he that rejected you rejecteth Me." This lies at the foundation of

the sin, the disbelief of the divine testimony contained in the inspired word of God.

2. More especially it is the rejection of the truth as it respects Jesus Christ and salvation by Him. The grand design of the Scriptures and of the Spirit in them is to instruct men in the knowledge of Christ. He said Himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." From the beginning to the end of the sacred volume this is the one absorbing topic. All others are merged into it as illustrative or confirmatory or commendatory of it. If Christ be received as a Saviour, the design of the Scriptures is answered; if He be not received their purpose is frustrated. With one voice they cry, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." And if this be not done they might as well not have been published. In the case supposed, the Saviour is rejected. In spite of all that the Scriptures say to recommend Him, He is not received. While all their light shines upon Him, His glory is not perceived, and He who is the substance of all truth is cast off as though He were the impersonation of error itself.

3. There is, however, an aggravating circumstance in this sin which must not be overlooked. Those by whom it is committed are supposed to have enjoyed special opportunities of becoming acquainted with the truth. The persons against whom it was at first alleged were the Pharisees. These were a class highly favoured. They had enjoyed the advantages of a good education. They had the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their hands. They had been accustomed to the ordinances of religion. They had above all enjoyed the opportunity of attending on the ministry of Christ. They had heard His words. They had seen His miracles. They had observed His life. But all these advantages failed to profit them. They sinned against all their opportunities. They are the types of a class still to be found among ourselves. These have enjoyed religious opportunities, but they have not improved them. A faithful ministry instructed them in public and in private. They were trained to a constant attendance upon divine ordinances. Parental instruction followed up the lessons of the sanctuary. It might be said of them, as of Israel in other days, "what more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?" But all their advantages have been cast

behind their back. They reject the Saviour and all His claims. They resist the word and all its testimony. They walk after their own counsels, and "a deceived heart hath led them astray." They may become openly sinful or profligate and glory in their shame. Or they may cultivate an external decency, like the ancient Pharisees, while inwardly they are full of moral corruption and all spiritual uncleanness.

4. Nor does their sin consist merely in the rejection of Christ and the testimony of the Divine Word and Spirit to Him, notwithstanding all their favourable opportunities and means of instruction. There is one other feature essential to it, and by which it is consummated. This is the spirit with which Christ and the truth are rejected. It will readily be perceived in those to whom Christ addressed the warning language of the text. We have only to suppose they sit for the picture, and we may draw it from them to the life. Do not the following features at once present themselves to our observation? This spirit is characterised by—

Obstinacy. They are determined not to receive the proposed Saviour and the truth. They say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." There may be evidence clear and satisfactory, but they will not consider it. They are not concerned to answer the arguments that may be offered for the truth. Their minds are made up without argument. They are devoid of the candour and of the openness to conviction that are necessary to the successful pursuit and discovery of the truth.

Enmity. They hate the truth. There is a secret feeling in their minds that it is entirely contrary to their desires and pursuits. They know if they should embrace it, a total change must pass upon them. Their pride is thus roused against it. Their prejudices all stand up in array to oppose its entrance to their minds. Their habits all run in an opposite direction. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Malice. They are not satisfied with the mere rejection of the truth, and the Saviour of whom it testifies. A strong desire is manifest to dishonour both. This is seen sometimes towards the truth itself, and perhaps more frequently towards those who profess it. Suppose them to hear an argument against revelation,

which seems to possess some force, with what delight they hail it and proclaim it. Or suppose they discover what seems to them to be some discrepancy in the Divine Word, with what satisfaction they find it. More probably, however, their malice will be directed against the professors of the truth. They watch them with an evil eye. They wait for their halting. They are glad to hear of their inconsistencies. They delight in their sins. They make apparent what spirit they are of.

Contempt. "What will this babbler say?" said the ancient Athenians of the preaching of Paul. They did not consider the man or his doctrine deserving of any consideration. Without any investigation, they were prepared summarily to reject them both. And so do those whom they still represent. They would not demean themselves to give their serious attention to an evangelical ministry. They know by intuition it is false. They scorn both it and those who exercise it.

To all this it must be added that, in the sin of which we treat, there is a peculiar dislike to the doctrine of the Spirit. It will not be tolerated. It is loaded with every epithet of reproach. It provokes all the feelings of obstinacy, enmity, malice, and contempt. In one torrent of abuse they are driven against that doctrine. They realise the offence into which they are thus vehemently borne as being by eminence a sin against the Holy Ghost.

One word more, and we may close this part of the subject. All the views to which we have adverted enter into the constitution of that sin of which we have been speaking. It does not consist in any one of them, but in them all united. It is a rejection of the truth as it is revealed in the Divine Word, especially of that truth as it respects Christ and His salvation—this in disregard of many favourable opportunities to know the truth as it is in Christ and His Word—with severe and bitter feelings of aversion and hatred, peculiarly provoked by any distinct reference to the Holy Spirit and His work in either the inspired Word, or the Divine Saviour whom it is His office to honour. This we take, judging by the light of the context, to be the sin against the Holy Ghost. And now proceed to inquire—

II. Why it is unpardonable.

It is not so from any want of efficacy in the Gospel. It is all-

sufficient. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." There is no want of power. Witness its triumph over the persecuting Saul, turning the lion into a lamb. Neither is there any want of mercy. Witness the conversion of Mary, out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils. The provisions of the Gospel are infinite. Its motto still is, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." This sin is unpardonable because of its own nature. It consists in the rejection of the way of salvation by Christ. And keeping this in mind, a few observations will make it plain how, in the very nature of the case, the sin against the Holy Ghost does not admit of being pardoned.

I. It supposes the rejection of the only way of salvation which God has provided for sinners. There is no other, as is abundantly testified. Christ says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Peter says, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus." And Paul says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So decided is this testimony, that John says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." This sin must be that of which we have been treating. We are not even to desire or to pray that a man living in it may be pardoned. Were we to do so, it would be asking God to falsify His own Word. He has there distinctly told us He will save no sinner otherwise than by the death of His Son. We must not, therefore, ask Him to do so. If we do, we ask Him to contradict Himself. We may and ought to ask Him to save all men. But then we must ask Him to do so through Jesus Christ. We dare not pray, Save this man, though continuing to reject Thy Son, and to pour contempt on His salvation. There is heaven, the city of God's habitation. Between it and the sinner a great gulph lies. Jesus has laid Himself across it. By His crucified body as the way, we may enter into it. But there is no other way. All who will may go by that way. None can find any other, and hence the conclusion is irresistible, that the sin which consists in the rejection of the only way of salvation must be unpardonable.

2. The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, because it is the rejection of the only way of salvation in opposition to the fullest evidence, and the only evidence that shall ever be given. On this view of the subject, the apostle Paul says to the Hebrews, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?" The witnesses to the truth of the gospel are Christ Himself, His apostles, and God. This threefold testimony ought surely to satisfy any reasonable mind. Christ testified by His life and ministry. The apostles testified by their labours and sufferings. God testified by miracles and prophecy. But those in question are not satisfied. They will not consent to examine the evidence. What then is to be done with them? Must the gospel be set aside to gratify their love of sin and their self-exaltation? We dare not say so. They must abide the consequence. They shall eat the fruit of their own doings. And having rejected Christ they cannot be partakers of His salvation.

3. This sin is unpardonable, because it is the rejection of the last dispensation which God will exercise towards sinners. This sentiment is adverted to by our Lord in the verses with which the text is connected. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Whosoever speaketh against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." The thought seems to be this. The Jews might have rejected their own economy, but they would be favoured with another. Even the hearers of Christ might reject His ministry and they would be blessed with another. But that other was to be "the ministration of the Spirit," and besides it there should not be any. Whoever therefore continued to reject the truth, presented to him under the last dispensation, had no hope of any farther revelation. Some of the most solemn passages in God's word are founded upon this view. Paul says to the Hebrews—"If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And he adds this fearful illustration grounded

on the very interpretation given above—"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" They who reject Christ and His salvation under the present economy, shall never be dealt with under another.

4. God has declared that they who reject Christ and His truth shall be overtaken with His judgments even here, by which their hearts will be still more hardened, and their case rendered increasingly hopeless. We have an example in ancient Israel when the sentence was pronounced upon them—"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." He was abandoned to his unbelief and sin, and persisted in it till he perished. Under the New Testament we have this threatening—"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." How awful. The sun hardens and destroys the fruit of the earth where it does not nourish and bring it to maturity; so does the mercy of God only increase the sin where it does not save. And under all dispensations men are warned in these solemn words—"Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded it, but ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof, I will therefore laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." Unbelief and sin are very hateful in the sight of God, and they who continue in them should stand in awe of the most fearful of all judgments—a hardened heart and a seared conscience.

5. It requires only to be added that it belongs to the sin against the Holy Ghost to continue in impenitence and unbelief. It is not an act but a habit. It is the calm, determined, and persevering rejection of Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of men, in opposition to all the testimony of His word and Spirit. Consequently in its nature it is incapable of forgiveness. And the language of our Lord is not too strong when He announces in the text—"Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

There are two practical remarks with which we conclude.

1. For encouragement. Are any distressed lest they may have committed this sin? Their fears on that ground are needless. No one who is afraid of having committed this sin has done so; for its very nature is to have no fear on that account. It is committed and continued in delightedly and knowingly, where it is committed at all. Fear is incompatible with its nature.

2. For warning. We need to be on our guard against it. Many who now would be horror-struck by the idea of it may yet be betrayed into it. The progress of sin is rapid and dangerous. The counsel of the apostle needs to be considered, "take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." "Thou standest by faith, be not high-minded, but fear." We need to be watchful against both the sins of the life and the sins of the heart. Apostacy may be nearer to any of us than we imagine. Cherish a sense of dependence on both the teaching and support of the Spirit. Through Him cleave unto Christ and ye shall be safe. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the spirit which He hath given us."

VII.

The Work of the Spirit in the Revelation of Christ to Simeon.

"There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."—LUKE ii. 25-32.



HERE are certain periods of history that have been distinguished by the appearance of an unusual number of great and good men. We thus think of what has been called the Elizabethan age, when mighty men arose, men of renown in all the departments of both church and state, and by their sanctified genius and well directed labours, exercised an influence upon mankind which has not yet spent its force. The same may be said of the time when our Lord came into the world. Both men and women of great note were then raised up to greet His approach. Such were Mary and Anna, Zecharias and Elizabeth, John the Baptist and Simeon. It is of the last of these we are now to speak, as his history is illustrative of the work of the Spirit.

There is a singular fulness of testimony to the Spirit in the account which is given of Simeon in the verses before us. It is said, "the Holy Ghost was upon him; it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost; he came by the Spirit into the temple." All he was, all he enjoyed, and all he did, are ascribed to the Spirit. This notice of Simeon shows us that the Holy Ghost is the companion of the good man's life. He is with him ever and

in all things. And this sentiment we shall now endeavour to illustrate, by a few remarks on the character, life, and death, of Simeon.

I. The personal character of Simeon is ascribed to the Spirit when it is said, "the Holy Ghost was upon him." This character is worthy of its author, and is summed up in a few words in the 25th verse, "the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel." Toward man he was just, toward God devout, and as respected himself, he was filled with zeal, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." What a comprehensive summary. A few words will be sufficient to explain it.

He was "just." The word is obviously to be understood here of a moral qualification. It is sometimes used to describe the state of the soul toward God, and is in that sense synonymous with the justified man. But it would be putting a forced construction upon it so to interpret it here. The passage describes the character of Simeon, and this quality must be understood in harmony with that view. It means that his views, and feelings, and conduct, toward men, were based on justice. He saw and recognized their claims, and was careful to render to all their due. The sentiment is that which is expressed by the Apostle Paul, when he says, "whatsoever things are just, think on these things." Every relation of life presents its claim upon us. We are bound to one another by ties which must not be broken. Parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, neighbours and friends, all owe a debt of obligation to each other. Justice requires that it shall be paid. This cannot be neglected without violating its sacred sanctions. It is therefore a solemn duty to cultivate the habit of inquiring in every case what is due to every one with whom we are brought into contact. There must be the utmost carefulness that we do not come short of their righteous claims. It will be so wherever the Spirit of God dwells, and in the measure in which He influences the mind. Such a man He constituted the aged Simeon, of whom it is testified, that he was "just."

At the same time he was "devout." This is expressive of the habit of his mind toward God. And it is important to notice how these two traits of character are united. It is, perhaps, possible to find a man who, under the influence of a good educa-

tion, is just, while yet he is not devout. But it would not be possible to find a devout man who was not also just. Every one whose heart is right toward God, must also be right in his conduct toward men. To secure justice, therefore, we should aim at making men devout. This was the great principle of our Lord when He said, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love of our neighbour is the natural offspring of the love of God. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." The devout man is of necessity just. He cannot, in the nature of the case, be otherwise. For why? He realizes the presence of God. He ever feels his responsibility to Him. His law is the guide of his life. He knows that God commands him to be just. As he cultivates a devotional spirit, the claims of justice are more and more felt. He cultivates this spirit by means of the word, the sacraments, and prayer. But what are the influences of these exercises? Whether the word is read in private, or heard in public, its lessons ever inculcate the duties which we owe to others. In the sacraments, we own and undertake their obligations. In prayer, we deal with that God to whom we desire to be acceptable now, and when we shall appear before Him at the judgment seat of Christ hereafter. Thus the devout man is of necessity just. These two graces are twin sisters, born and nourished together, and continually strengthening and guiding one another. Such a man was Simeon.

It completes his character to observe his zeal. This is implied "in his waiting for the consolation of Israel." He was deeply concerned for his church and nation, Israel. He desired its consolation. He longed to see it happy, religion prospering, and the blessed fruits growing up in rich abundance. He was an old man, and this spirit had not been weakened by the infirmities of years. On the contrary, it grew with his growth. His eye was ever intent, watching for the rising of that sun of righteousness, whose beams, he knew, would dissipate the darkness that brooded on the earth. He was a true and wise patriot and philanthropist. He knew where the secret of prosperity for both the church and the state lay. It was in the mission of the Messiah. Jesus would be the real Reformer. He, therefore, waited for

Him with intense desire. And hence, when at length he saw and embraced Him, he felt that the end of his life was accomplished. He could truly say, "this is all my salvation and all my desire."

What a lovely character was Simeon! Just, devout, burning with holy zeal; and all this, we have reason to believe, from his earliest childhood to old age. Such is the character which is formed by the Spirit of God. It is recorded for our instruction and imitation. It is also so presented as to hold out to us the highest encouragement to imitate it—as shall now appear while we proceed to consider—

II. The life of Simeon. We read in the 26th verse—"It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ;" and again in the 27th—"He came by the Spirit into the temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law."

No doubt the revelation of the 26th verse was peculiar, and may be classed with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Yet it has many parallels in the history of the people of God. Abraham had the destruction of Sodom revealed to him before it took place. And Jesus said to His disciples, on one occasion, "there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." It is difficult to draw the line of separation between the ordinary and miraculous influences of the Spirit. They are often so close as to merge into one another. Instead of trying to distinguish them, it is more for edification to observe the great lesson which they unitedly inculcate. And is it not this, that whatever is necessary for the real good, or even the genuine consolation of the servant of God, shall not be withheld from him? Who can say whether this promise is to be classed among the miraculous or the ordinary—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant?" Whatever they ought to know, or need to know, they shall know. It was good for Simeon and others that the Saviour should be revealed to him, before he died, and that he should long have an assurance of this favour, and therefore it was granted to him. In like manner, may all believers say—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath the heart con-

ceived what God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto to us by His Spirit." These discoveries refer no doubt to the provision of grace for the salvation of the soul, with their blessed results in time and throughout eternity. Yet they are not to be interpreted, so as to exclude the dealings of providence in preparing and ripening our minds for either obeying or enjoying them. Impressions may be made upon us by the providences of the Spirit, which shall exercise a powerful influence over us for our own good and that of others. Substantially we may enjoy all that was granted to Simeon, "when it was revealed to him that he should not taste death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ."

One thing, however, is to be observed in the way of duty, if we would attain to such a privilege. We must, like Simeon, be found waiting upon God. It is not in any careless habit or indifferent frame of mind we need expect such visits of the Spirit. It is only in earnest, faithful, and diligent exercises of devotion. It was while Daniel engaged himself in the study of Jeremiah's prophecies and in exercises of humiliation and prayer, in accordance with them, that he received intimation of the set time when the great Deliverer would appear upon the earth. In like manner if we would attain to gracious and peculiar discoveries of the Spirit we must expect them in the same way. Let us only do so and we shall find light in the hour of darkness. Our views will be opened to clearer apprehensions of the truth, and our hearts will be influenced in harmony with them. Grace and providence will conspire to teach us. We may still hear a voice that saith, "this is the way, walk ye in it." We may see the path of duty so plain as to have no hesitation about the course we should follow.

Of this sentiment there is a clear illustration and a strong confirmation in the other incidents of Simeon's history recorded in the text—"That he came by the Spirit into the temple at the very time when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law." How did it come to pass that he entered the temple at this precise and critical moment? We are distinctly informed it was by an impulse of the Spirit on his mind. Let it be admitted this was a remarkable case, yet there is a principle underlying it which is of universal application. David says, "Thou wilt guide me by Thy counsel while I live ;"

and again, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Is not this, then, substantially the same blessing that was enjoyed by Simeon when he was led by the Spirit into the temple? Some providence is employed to arrest the attention and direct the conduct. We are often constrained to feel in our own case, and to observe in that of others, there is some secret hand upon us, leading us by the right way. Providence is as real now as when the Israelites were guided by the cloudy pillar in the wilderness. It may still be said, "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." How often has some poor, thoughtless sinner been led somehow into a house of God, where he has unexpectedly heard words by which his soul was saved? How frequently has the disconsolate mourner in Zion been directed to hear some discourse that dispelled all his darkness and filled him with joy. How often has the believer seen that some restraint was laid upon him by which he was hindered from pursuing the path in which he would have gone? And again, that he was drawn out in another direction, whither he had no design or desire to go? They that will mark providences, will ever find providences to mark. And it is as true of every believer as it was of Simeon, that the same Spirit who formed his character at first also guides him as long as he lives. Nor is this all. It remains to observe—

III. The Spirit which formed the character and guided the life of Simeon ripened him for a happy and triumphant death. We read, "Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

We do not know whether Simeon's prayer was immediately granted. Perhaps it was. Whether or not, there is manifested in him a blessed readiness for the solemn change. And it is both most instructive and encouraging to observe the record here given of that readiness.

"He took up the Saviour in his arms, and blessed God." He may have done so as an expression of endearment, or, more probably, to present Him, in conjunction with His parents, to the Lord. And with such an offering to God, he might well praise

Him. So also may we do. We may embrace the Saviour in the arms of our faith and love. Thus presenting Him as our offering to the Lord, we may praise Him and say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

"He said, Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," He had gained the object of life—the salvation of his soul. He was conscious of enjoying it while he embraced the Saviour. And, possessing such a blessing, the fear of death was removed, and he longed to enter on its full enjoyment in a better world. It is so still. The knowledge of Christ disarms death of its terrors. It enables the dying saint to say, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In these exercises, however, Simeon was far from indulging a selfish spirit. While he rejoiced in his own salvation, his happiness was greatly enhanced by seeing how the same was provided for others. Hence he said of it, "Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people." It was prepared for all, and was publicly proclaimed to all. This is the nature of true religion. Whenever a sinner is himself saved, he desires to see others saved with him. "His heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved." When Barnabas "came and saw the grace of God" in the people of Antioch, "he was glad." And hence, when many a saint has been spared to see some signal triumph of grace in the conversion of souls, or even some enlarged agency to make it known to men, he has been ready, like Simeon, full of gratitude and joy, to depart out of the world of sin, and ascend to those blessed regions where it can never come.

The terms which Simeon employs to describe the unspeakable blessing which God had thus provided for men, are most elevating and impressive, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel." Consider them a moment.

"A light to lighten the Gentiles." The heathen world in all its sin and misery rose before His imagination. But here was a remedy to meet the twofold evil. He held in his arms the Saviour of whom it was written, "all nations shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed." As the sun rises over

the dark and cheerless world, so would He rise as "the sun of righteousness over all nations, with healing in His beams." And as he anticipated His glory and their blessedness, his aged frame might well tremble with joy.

"The glory of His people, Israel." This was true patriotism. He desired the honour of His nation, but the honour He most desired was, that it might be a blessing to mankind. It would be the glory of Israel, that it had given birth to the Saviour of mankind. Long had it been the centre of light and truth to the nations of the earth. But now a new era had come to it and to them. The high purpose of its mission would now be accomplished, when "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." And the jubilee of earth had arrived, when "out of Zion should go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Simeon anticipated the speedy fulfilment of the prophet's words, "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Filled with delight in such a glorious prospect, He desired to depart in peace.

Such is the lesson of Simeon's history as a man in whom the Spirit dwelt. He made him just, devout, and zealous. Thus truly sanctified by Him, He guided him along the path of life, revealing to him all it was good for him to know, and stimulating him to that which it was right and profitable for him to do. At length, having conducted him to the verge of time, He enabled him in old age to die in peace, sustaining his own soul with the assurance of its salvation, and causing it to rejoice in the extension of the same mercy to the world lying in iniquity.

Let me conclude with one lesson. To make us holy, keep us holy, and die happy, is the work of the Spirit. He can do it, and He only. These blessings are to be sought from Him in union with one another. Let us not expect them to be separated. Like Simeon let us see that "the Holy Ghost is upon us"—that we are taught by Him, and led by Him, and then like him may we hope to die, saying—"Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

VIII.

The Spirit promised by Christ in answer to Prayer.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.”—LUKE xi. 13.



IN the prophecy of Zechariah, the 12th chapter at the 10th verse, there is this precious promise, obviously referring to gospel times—"I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." It is observable that when the Spirit is given as a "Spirit of grace," He also appears as a "Spirit of supplications." In other words, a gracious state and a habit of prayer are ever associated. It is also observable that this prayerfulness is accompanied by the highest religious prosperity. Deep penitence and its consequent blessings of pardon and purity are its results. The lesson is a blessed one, that prayer is the pathway to all that is good and necessary for the sinner.

This doctrine of the prophet is exactly parallel to that of our Lord in the passage now before us. He had been discoursing on the subject of prayer. He had given the model of prayer, so familiar to us all, to His disciples. He had enjoined the exercise of prayer as an imperative duty. And He held out the strongest encouragement to all who would practise it, assuring them it would secure the highest of all blessings, even the gift of the Holy Spirit, saying—"If your fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Let us consider the blessing promised, and the manner of obtaining it, suggested by our Lord's representation of both our duty and privilege.

I. The promised blessing is the Holy Spirit.

The simplicity and fulness of our Lord's words deserve to be specially noticed. He does not speak of the influence of the Spirit, or of certain benefits which that influence would confer wherever it was exercised. He says, "the Father will give the Holy Spirit." The Spirit Himself would be imparted, in whatever way He was capable of being given by God or received by the sinner. The Apostle Paul expresses the same truth when he says to the Corinthians—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The Holy Ghost condescends to dwell in the hearts of men. He abides with them, in the plenitude of His grace. Whatever He is in His own essential excellence, and whatever He can do in His sovereign grace, are pledged and secured on their behalf. This strong, though simple language, seems to be employed, in order to elevate our ideas of the blessing to be obtained to the highest possible estimate. It is nothing less than to be put in possession of the Holy Spirit in His infinite attributes and gracious offices.

Another way in which we may be enabled to apprehend this promised blessing is by observing the manner in which it is expressed by another Evangelist than Luke. Matthew's version of our Lord's words is—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." Luke's phrase is, "the Holy Spirit." Matthew's is, "good things." Our Lord may have used them both, either at the same or at different times. There is no contrariety in them. The one is explanatory of the other. He who receives the Holy Spirit, in that gift receives all good things. He who would really possess all good things must seek the Holy Spirit. This is the gift of gifts—that one gift in which all others are included. It is recorded of an ancient king that, being desirous to confer the highest favour on one who had rendered him a high service, he proposed to him to make choice of any thing he desired, assuring him it would be granted. With much wisdom he asked for the king's daughter, justly reckoning this gift would bring along

with it all the honour and wealth and other advantages which her royal father was capable of conferring. In like manner our Lord proposes one gift to His people, "the Holy Spirit;" but this, in both the divine interpretations and their experience, comprehends all "good things."

If we would inquire more particularly what are these good things, there are passages in the divine word well fitted to afford us satisfaction. In the 6th chapter of Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, we find this comprehensive summary at the 11th verse, "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." In the last clause the rendering might have been *even* by the Spirit of our God. From this expression as well as from the place which the clause is made to occupy, we are led to suppose that it has reference to all the blessings that had been enumerated. If sinners are washed, if they are sanctified, and if they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the actual possession and enjoyment of these blessings they are indebted to the Spirit of God. Are not these then truly "good things?" To be washed from our sins, so that no guilt attaches to us; to be sanctified in nature, so as to be the subjects of true holiness; to be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, so as to be accepted in the beloved; what favours comparable to these can be conferred upon sinful men? In them is the germ of all true happiness. Yet the Spirit has a work to do in the bestowment of them all. He it is that washes the unclean soul in the fountain of atoning blood. He it is that renews the heart in righteousness, saving the sinner by the washing of regeneration. He it is that brings the soul to Christ, and unites it to Him by a living faith, so that it is justified by His righteousness. The personal and actual possession of every gracious blessing, is the result of the immediate operation of the Spirit of God. Justly, therefore, may all these "good things" be identified with the gift of "the Holy Spirit."

In the same way there is another passage in the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, in which the good things of the Spirit are comprehensively expressed in a different form. In the 5th chapter, at the 22d verse, he says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." This catalogue presents the subject under a new aspect. In the former to the Corinthians, pardon, purification,

and acceptance with God, are named as the result of the Spirit's operation. But in the latter to the Galatians, the apostle traces the influences of the Spirit upon the heart and life, which may be said to be the effects of the former blessings. These are of such a kind as to involve in their very nature the blessedness of those who are the subjects of them. They need only to be recited to make us sensible how true is this statement. Love—to God and to men. If such a principle be in us, it brings its own reward in the return which it secures of the love of God and man to us. Joy—in God. This is the highest form of bliss, which angels as well as men are capable of attaining. Peace—with God, and men, and ourselves. What might not be given for such a happy condition. Long-suffering.—In bearing with the infirmities or injuries of others we secure the advantages of the grace of patience. Gentleness.—By cultivating it we avoid the hostility, and secure the endearment of others. Goodness.—He who practises it is doubly blessed, blessed in giving and blessed in receiving. Faith.—Whether we understand it, of confidence in God, or fidelity to man, it is the safeguard of our highest interests. Meekness.—How happy is he who has learned to submit his will to that of God, and is enabled to say under the trials that befall him, "Thy will be done." Temperance.—It is the parent of health, enjoyment, and prosperity. These blessings united constitute the fruit of the Spirit. If any of them is wanted the fruit is defective. The term is fruit, not fruits. It reminds us, that if the Spirit be in us, they must all be cultivated. They are all required to constitute His fruit. If such then be in us, and abound, we shall indeed be possessors of "good things."

In a word, to learn the exceeding excellence of the gift of the Spirit, we have only to notice the titles which He bears in the word of God, and consider what is implied in them. He is called the "good Spirit," essentially so in His own nature, and bestowing the highest expressions of goodness on the children of men. The "Spirit of grace," graciously regarding, and influencing, and saving sinners. "The Spirit of truth," teaching it in His word, and applying it to the conscience and heart. "The Spirit of understanding," enlightening the minds of men, and enabling them rightly to apprehend all that concerns their highest interests. "The Spirit of wisdom," discovering the best objects after which we can seek, and the right means of gaining them. "The

Spirit of power," strengthening at once to resist temptation, and discharge with faithfulness the duties of life. "The Spirit of love," shedding the hallowed influence of this heavenly affection over the hearts of men. "The Spirit of promise," holding out all the encouragements that can either reconcile us to present troubles, or stimulate us to invigorated action. "The Spirit of knowledge," enabling us in our experience to test and realize the truth of His instructions. "The Spirit of judgment," visiting for iniquity, so as to punish and purify. "The Spirit of counsel," instructing us under all the emergencies that need His direction. "The Spirit of Christ," revealing and conveying all the blessings which He has purchased for men. "The Spirit of God," coming from Him and bringing to Him. "The Spirit of glory," crowning all who receive Him with glory, honour, and immortality, even eternal life. We cannot too highly magnify the gift of the Spirit. We cannot sufficiently recommend it. Language fails to describe the good things implied in it. We shall not attempt to prosecute it farther, but proceed to enquire—

II. How such a precious gift may be obtained by men: "Your Heavenly Father," said Christ, "will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

On this subject it is not instruction we need so much as a disposition to act upon what we already know and admit. We allow at once that to obtain the Spirit, we require only to ask Him in prayer. Yet how slow we are to do so! What doubt, and reluctance, and suspicion mingle with our prayers! Not for the sake of instruction, therefore, which is not needed, but that we may be stimulated to act upon our privilege and ask for the gift of the Spirit, let me illustrate the close connection between the exercise of prayer and the gift of the Spirit.

In doing so we may begin with the clear and impressive views of the context. At the 9th verse, our Lord utters His command with a repetition of words well fitted to arrest our attention. "Ask, seek, knock," He says. His command is, in each case, accompanied by a promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Not satisfied with the general command and promise, He repeats them both with the most particular application to every

creature that needs the gift of the Spirit. He adds, "For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." No one shall meet with a refusal. And then, to crown all, He employs a figure which contains an argument that all can understand and ought powerfully to feel. He appeals to them by the parental and filial affections, of which all are conscious. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" How surprising the force, and variety, and repetition of the figures that are employed! We cannot conceive of any representation more fitted to make its way to the heart and understanding of men. But He does not leave it here—still going on to repeat, and enforce, and concentrate His illustration in the language of the text—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" The whole conduct and discourse of our Lord discover an earnestness that could have been called forth only by the perception of the strong reluctance which needed to be overcome. They leave us and all men without excuse, abundantly testifying that whoever would enjoy the gift of the Spirit has only to ask that he may receive.

Again, the duty thus powerfully inculcated by our Lord is remarkably confirmed and illustrated in the history of the Church. Let me direct your attention to a few examples in the Acts of the Apostles.

In the 1st chapter, at the 4th verse, we are informed Christ "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." This He explains in the next verse, saying, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And He adds in ver. 8, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." How His words were understood is plain from the conduct of the disciples, as we read at the 14th verse, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." They were warned that without the Spirit they could do nothing. They waited for Him. But they did so in prayer, knowing that thus, and thus only, could He be obtained.

Then see the realisation of their hopes in the 2nd chapter, and the manner in which it was obtained. We are told in the 1st verse, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." How were they occupied? No doubt, in prayer. And while so occupied, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." These emblems of the Spirit were given to convince them of the power of the agency under which they were now commissioned to go forth and seek the world's conversion to Christ. And soon had they proof of its sufficiency, for on that same day, while they preached the Gospel, three thousand were added to the Church, who "continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and prayers."

As the Apostles commenced, so they continued, seeking and obtaining the Spirit by prayer. An impressive example is recorded in the 4th chapter of the Acts. Peter and John had performed a notable miracle, which excited the envy and provoked the persecution of the Jews. As soon as they were released out of the hands of their enemies, they "went to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them." They then united in prayer, and when it ended, we are told, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness." This fresh exhibition of Divine favour and power was, no doubt, designed to impress upon them still more the inseparable connection between prayer and the gift of the Spirit.

In all things they remembered it and acted upon it. In the 6th chapter we have an account of the election of deacons; and while the reason assigned for the office is thus given—"We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word"—the whole transaction is shown to have been conducted in the spirit and exercise of prayer. Thus were the deacons elected and set apart to their work. "Whom they set before the

the Apostles ; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." Again, in the 13th chapter, when missionaries were to be sent forth through the surrounding districts, this is the record of the procedure. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

It is needless to add to these examples. The early Church presented a lovely example of continued prayer and continued success through the grace of the Spirit thus obtained. So long as prayer for the Spirit lasted, He was graciously conferred. It was when such prayer was restrained, coldness and deadness and error and sin returned as a full-swelling tide and overwhelmed the Church.

The doctrine, however, remains immutably the same. For our own salvation and that of others, the Spirit is to be sought and found only by prayer. This is still the command—"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." And this is still the promise—"If your fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Let us act on this gracious promise. Let us ask for the Spirit. Nothing else will suffice for our purposes, and nothing else should satisfy.

Let us receive Him as the free gift of God. We can give no equivalent for so high a favour. Nothing is asked, and nothing can be received.

Let us pray for Him habitually. He is always needed, and should always be sought, for every duty and every difficulty. Without Him we can do nothing.

Let us ask for Him in faith. The more we exercise confidence in the promise of God, the more we honour Him. We should ask, "nothing doubting."

Let us ask with earnestness. The high interests that are at stake demand it—our own souls, whether their conversion, or edification, or final salvation, and the souls of others.

Let us ask with importunity. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Ask and receive till your joy be full.

Rest assured, all who so pray will experience the truth of the text—"If your fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

IX.

The Work of the Spirit in the Membership of the Church.

"Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—JOHN III. 5.



HIS work of the Spirit, by which members are introduced to the Church of Christ, is one of the most important in the divine word. This is sufficiently indicated by the large place which is given to it, the numerous and various illustrations used to elucidate it, and the strong assertions that are made of its necessity. There is good reason for all this treatment of it. It lies at the foundation of practical religion in the heart and life. Without it there is no godliness here, nor salvation hereafter. It matters not what may be the forms observed, or the profession made, or the attainments gained; without this work of the Spirit they are all vain and ineffectual. On the other hand, whenever it has been effected, the heart is made right with God, and the conduct is duly ordered toward man. He that has undergone this change is a partaker of eternal life—begun on earth, to be consummated in heaven.

Let us, therefore, address our earnest attention to the consideration of this subject. In doing so, we may notice, 1, the nature of the work described in the text; 2, its author; and 3, its necessity. And may God grant that we shall all be participators in it; knowing who hath said, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

I. Its nature. This is brought before us with singular fulness in the divine word, as I will now endeavour to show.

There is a reference to the subject in the third verse of the

chapter, which is deserving of notice at the outset. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In the margin, another reading is suggested. There it is "born from above." And both renderings are instructive. "Born again." We are hereby taught that the change contemplated is one which must pass upon the man, beside that which took place when he was ushered into the present life. A second birth must be experienced. Its nature is more distinctly signified by the other reading—"born from above." It is heavenly. It is one that can proceed only from a divine influence. Its source is sufficiently indicative of what it must be.

In the text itself there is another illustration. It proceeds on a principle very common in the Scriptures. A sign, and the thing signified, are both mentioned. When God received Abraham into His fellowship, He gave him a sign, while He also conferred on him the gracious change of which it was an emblem. The sign was circumcision; and the change is expressed in the words of inspiration, "a sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised." This is a most valuable interpretation. It teaches us that the real blessing, the thing signified, preceded the sign. The sign was added as a token of the change which had already taken place. Just so then is it with the same subject, illustrated in a similar manner, though with different terms, in the text. The water and the Spirit correspond to circumcision and the previous righteousness of which it was a sign. The water is baptism, and the birth of the spirit is the thing signified by it. The baptism does not cause the birth; but is an emblem of it. Hence, when it was administered by the apostles to those who desired to make a profession of Christ, they invariably required them to give evidence that they possessed the thing signified before they could administer to them the outward sign. They would not baptize them until they had evidence of their regeneration. But while we must thus carefully distinguish between the sign and that which it represents, and never confound the observance of the one with the participation of the other, we are not to overlook the illustration of the subject deducible from the terms employed to describe them both. The water of baptism is the sign. How instructive! As water cleanses, and refreshes, and fertilizes; so when the soul is born of the Spirit it is cleansed from sin, it is refreshed and in-

vigorated by divine grace, and it is made fruitful in good works. Then the work itself is brought before us with singular clearness and propriety under the terms of being "born of the Spirit." It is a new birth. The soul was previously dead in trespasses and sins; but in this gracious change it is made alive unto God. And hence the Apostle Paul, using the very same illustration as our Lord, and uniting the sign and the thing signified, addresses the believers at Rome, who had given evidence of their regeneration, in these words:—"We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.—Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In full harmony with these illustrations of the context and the text, we find other figures, very numerous, in the divine word. They are so many we can only name them.

One is "a new heart." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Such a change is produced in the heart, the seat of life, as may be compared to the transformation of stone into flesh. It is as if the man was brought under the dominion of another soul, "a new spirit."

Another figure is a creation. "Create, O God, a clean heart: renew a right spirit within me." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." It is only when this change has been produced the man can really be said to live as a reasonable and immortal being.

Another is conversion. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Such a transformation must take place as shall make proud and self-sufficient man docile, and humble, and simple as little children.

Another is regeneration. "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Wherever salvation is attained, it is by regeneration.

Another is the new man. "Put off the old man, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

It need only be added, the Scriptures do not hesitate to speak

of those who have undergone this great change as being "partakers of the divine nature." They are thereby rendered holy, heavenly, God-like.

Look now at the number of these figures. Think of their force. And what an idea must they convey to us of the greatness of the change indicated by them? An apostle does not hesitate to speak of it as a change from "death to life; from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It affects the entire man; and this part of the subject would be incomplete without a reference to its effects on the whole mental constitution.

The understanding is enlightened. "Ye were sometime darkness, now are ye light in the Lord." All things are seen with new eyes—sin, self, salvation, God, the world, time, and eternity. The converted man is constrained to say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

The conscience is quickened. Before it was insensible alike to the claims of God, and the man's own high destiny; but now it is awakened to see, and feel, and own them. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died."

The will is subdued. Bent on self-gratification before, its cry now is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The affections are purified and placed upon their right objects. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

The life is made holy. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.—Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.—Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.—Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of your inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Such is the work of which the text treats. A greater there could not be. The creation of the material universe does not involve interests so high as the new birth of the soul in righteousness. It is such that in every instance, in which it is effected, it fills heaven itself with joy.

How then shall it be attained? This leads us to notice—

II. Its author. The text ascribes it to the Spirit of God.

We are fully prepared for this announcement by what has already been said. It is clear no power short of that which is divine could produce the result which has been described. Blessed be God, however, it is not beyond the operation of His grace. Sinners may be born of the Spirit.

It is important to notice how this twofold consideration is put forth by our Lord in the passage with which the text is connected. He says at the 6th verse—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." The flesh is used to signify a condition of sinfulness, and the affirmation is that no one who is a sinner can be the author of this change. He cannot produce it in himself or in others. As water cannot rise higher than its source, so the sinner cannot rise above his own nature and produce the new birth of the soul in righteousness. On the other hand, the Spirit is fully equal to this work. He can produce in the soul of man His own moral image. He has infinite power and unerring wisdom. It is the very work which He has undertaken in the new creation. It is every way worthy of Him. And so it is written of those who have become the subjects of His grace—"To them that received Him hath He given power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

It cannot be necessary to adduce proof of either the ability or willingness of the Spirit to effect this work in the soul of the sinner. These are assumed in the text. We need to be "born of the Spirit"—implying that of Him we may be so born. But although it may be needless to construct an argument, it may not be unprofitable to adduce an illustration of the subject. Remember then the prophet's vision of the dry bones in the valley. These are presented to him as the emblems of death. They were very dry. He is commanded to speak to them, dead though they be, and under the power of his word they are moved and become united and clothed with flesh and skin. Still there is no life in them. To remedy this evil, he receives a command—"Prophesy to the wind, son of man, prophesy to the wind, and say unto it, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe

upon these slain that they may live." He did so, and we are told of the result. "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they rose up, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." The lesson is obvious. That dead sinners may be made alive to God the Spirit must be sought in earnest prayer. When He is invoked in the name of Jesus He will come down with His quickening energy. Under His gracious operation they that were dead in sin will be made alive unto God. And when this change takes place they are "born of the Spirit."

No doubt there is much in this work which we are incapable of explaining. Our Lord distinctly asserts so much in this very passage. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How He enters the mind, or how He operates so as to produce the blessed change ascribed to Him we do not know. But the very assertion of the mysteriousness of His operation is an assumption of its reality. And yet after all there is nothing more mysterious in the new than in the old creation. Solomon says, in illustration of this very subject—"As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." The natural birth is as incomprehensible to us as the spiritual birth. Both are facts, but the manner in which the one or the other is effected, is hidden from us.

This must be admitted, yet we have much information respecting it, which is highly important for the direction of our conduct.

We know what the instrument is which the Spirit is pleased usually to employ in accomplishing the blessed work. It is the written word. "Ye were born, says an apostle, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Of His own will, says another, begat He us with the word of truth." And Christ recognized the same principle when He prayed—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." We have no reason to expect that any soul shall be born of the Spirit, where the truth is not used as the means which He is pleased to employ, but we have every reason to expect that as this instrument is used in the right spirit He will own it and make it effectual.

Observe the history of the preached gospel. The apostle says, "we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are saved, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It was while Paul preached, it is recorded of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." And it was while he did the same to the jailor of Philippi, that "he believed, rejoicing in God with all his house." This is enough for us, both to urge us to the duty of making known the truth, and so to seek the conversion of others, and to apply the truth to our own heart and conscience, that we may be quickened and edified by it. As to the former, this is the law of God's house, "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." And as to the latter, we should learn to say with the apostle, "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

How the mind may be exercised in being brought under the power of the truth, it is not for us to determine. "All these worketh that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every man, severally as he will." Some are gently drawn by the love of Christ, as appears to have been the case of Lydia. Others are smitten by the terrors of the law, as seems to have been done with the jailor. The manner in which every one is exercised by the Spirit in his conversion, is no doubt that which is best adapted to his case. It may be more or less sudden, or to our apprehension gradual. Our concern should be not so much with the manner of the change as with the change itself. However it may be done, the end at which we should aim is, to have the promise realized to us, "I will put My law in their hearts, and write it in their minds." We must be "born of the Spirit." Nothing short of this will suffice, and nothing short of it should satisfy. If we have that we have all things. If we have not that, we have nothing. And to enforce this sentiment, we now proceed to consider—

III. The necessity of the new birth. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

This necessity is very strongly enforced in the passage before us, and we need not go beyond its views. Observe the person on whom it is urged. It is Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews, occupying a high and honourable place among his countrymen. He came to our Lord by night, desiring to obtain instruction, although he had not courage openly to ask for it before all men. He was under serious concern for the salvation of his soul. From other notices of him in the Scriptures, we are led to think of him as a just, humane, and good man. This is the person to whom our Lord presents the doctrine of the new birth. He does it in a way which clearly implies that he needed it. Excellent, and amiable, and elevated as he was, he could not be saved without it. It did not signify that he declared himself, with all his mental and moral attainments, incapable of apprehending it. Our Lord replied to all this, "art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" However he might be perplexed with the questions, "how can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Christ only answered, "ye must be born again." And if Nicodemus required it, who does not? A more powerful argument for the absolute and universal necessity of conversion to man could not be conceived. To every child of Adam it may be said, "except thou art born of the Spirit thou canst not be saved."

Look also at the varied and strong terms which our Lord uses through the passage to urge this necessity. He says at the third verse, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." He cannot see it. It will be impossible for him to see its nature so as to understand or enjoy it. A blind man cannot see colours. A deaf man cannot hear sounds. No more can an unconverted man apprehend that kingdom, "which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He is of necessity debarred from its blessedness.

He changes the expression in the fifth verse, and says, "except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He cannot enter into it. The kingdom of God may be understood either of the church on earth, or of that which is in heaven. And the assertion is, that without being born of the Spirit, the sinner cannot be a member of the one or of the other.

He cannot otherwise be a member of the church on earth. He

may be baptized, but that does not make him a member of it. He may eat the Lord's Supper, but that does not make him a member of it. He may thus have the form of godliness, while he is not under its power. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature." Otherwise he may hear his words, "every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away," Every mere professor, not born of the Spirit, shall be detected and cast out.

Still more, he cannot be a member of the church in heaven. How could he take a part in its exercises? Its song he could not sing, "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." How could he mingle in its society? "Ye are come unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." Think of an unconverted man with such companions. He would shrink from their fellowship, and be incapable of converse with them. How could he enjoy their blessedness? "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Perfect conformity to Christ will constitute the glory of heaven. Holiness will be its happiness. "The Lamb is the light thereof." The presence and fellowship of Jesus will be its everlasting joy. O! how just, how reasonable the sentiment, "except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Let me conclude with the exhortation of Christ, "enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

X.

The Abundant Grace of the Spirit under the Dispensation of the Gospel.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

"But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."—JOHN vii. 37—39.



It is doubtful whether, in the words, "the Scripture hath said," our Lord referred to any particular passage in the ancient Scriptures. It is more probable His allusion was to their spirit and promise. Such passages as the following would naturally be in His thoughts:—"Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not"—"I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"—"All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord." Such promises would readily lead our Lord to speak as He hath done of the Scripture. There is, however, happily, no doubt about the meaning of His words, whatever may have been the allusion that suggested them. The interpretation is added by the sacred historian, saying, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." The design of both the reference of Christ and the explanation of the evangelist is to set forth the abundant measure in which the Spirit of God would be poured out in gospel times. This should be the peculiarity of the dispensation, that the Spirit should be given under it as He had never been given before. The whole passage is so constructed as to excite the highest hope and the largest expectations. And it will be our present object to notice the prominent features of this promise as they appear in the text, so understood.

In doing so, we shall consider (1) the time and place of our

Lord's invitation ; (2) the invitation itself ; (3) the abundance of the blessing announced in it ; (4) the encouragement to wait for it and enjoy it ; and (5) the manner in which any shall, and all may, participate in it.

I. Observe the time and place of the invitation. It was "in the last day, that great day of the feast." The feast referred to is that of tabernacles. And the day spoken of is that which is thus described in the book of Leviticus, xxiii. 36:—"On the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you ; it is a solemn assembly, and ye shall do no servile work therein." The Jewish historians inform us that peculiar solemnities were observed on that day, besides those enjoined in the original institute. One commentator remarks, "On this day, it was customary to perform a solemn ceremony in this manner : the priest filled a golden vase with water from the fount of Siloam, which was borne with great solemnity, attended with the sound of trumpets, through the gate of the temple ; and, being mixed with wine, was poured on the sacrifice on the altar." This was, therefore, a high day, and this was the solemnity with which the rejoicings of the feast were terminated. We can readily enter into the spirit of the occasion. The people would be filled with excitement, and universal enthusiasm would pervade the hosts of Israel. They would thus end the lengthened and exciting engagements which had long detained them in the sacred city. They would be on the eve of their departure to the distant parts of the land where the several tribes of Israel dwelt. This would be their congratulatory farewell, until they should come up again after another year to their sacred feasts. Nothing, therefore, could exceed the interest of both time and place. Our Lord took advantage of it to gain the attention of the people. We may suppose how His benevolent bosom heaved with sympathy towards them while He beheld their enthusiastic occupations. He saw them busy with a ceremony which their law never appointed, and which, therefore, their God could not accept. He beheld them utterly ignorant of the true import and design of those ceremonies which they had received from their Heavenly Father. There stood He, the sum and substance of them all ; but their eyes did not behold Him, nor did their ears hear Him. "The law was given by Moses but grace and truth (all the grace and truth symbolised by it) came by Jesus Christ." He would, therefore, make one more

appeal to them before He and they would be separated for ever. We may be sure it was uttered in a spirit such as animated Him, when looking down on their city from the Mount of Olives, He wept over it, and cried, "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes." Anxious to prevent this sad catastrophe, if that were yet possible, "He stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Such were the time and place of our Lord's invitation. Let us now consider—

II. The invitation itself. It discovers a noble spirit and a generous sentiment. And every particular in it deserves our notice—the manner as well as the matter of it.

"Jesus stood." We cannot help thinking of Him as placing Himself in some conspicuous situation where He might be seen by the people and attract their attention. Mad on their vain superstitions, they hurried past Him without observation; and He strove to arrest them and catch their wandering eyes.

He "stood and cried." We conceive of Him elevating His voice, so as to be heard amid the din of the multitude. He had that to tell them which it would be their highest interest to hear and consider. Hitherto they had turned a deaf ear to Him, but He would speak yet again, and in a voice that, trumpet-tongued, proclaimed, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Thus elevated and vehement, He cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." He placed Himself in contrast to the idle ceremony with which they were occupied, and entreated them to look to Him and not to it. What a rebuke to all who run with avidity to outward forms, while they neglect Him who is the substance of them all! And yet what gracious encouragement to all who would hearken to His words and apprehend their meaning. "Any man," He says—no matter who or what. The invitation is universal and unconditional. Be he learned or ignorant, moral or immoral, formal or careless, enlightened or superstitious. If he be only a man, a sinner, to him I speak.

"If any man thirst." Is he dissatisfied with his present attainments or enjoyments? Is there a void in his soul which he desires to have filled? Does he long for knowledge or hap-

piness? Would he have the favour and blessing of God? To him I speak.

“Let him come unto me.” Turn away from ceremonies which cannot profit, and draw nigh to Him who can bless you. Alas! He might say, like their prophet of old, when God spake by him, “My people have committed two evils—they have forsaken Me, the living fountain of waters, and they have hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

“Let him come unto Me and drink.” “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, yea, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is none else; a just God and a Saviour.”

There are two thoughts in this invitation of Christ deserving of particular attention.

The first is, that Christ proposes to confer His Spirit upon all who will come to Him, under the emblem of water. The water brought from Siloam, and which the people poured out with such rejoicing, suggested the emblem to Him. He would give them water indeed. He would give them living water. Let them only drink it, and they would never thirst. It would be in them “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” It would make them clean from all impurity. It would refresh their weary souls in the journey of life. And it would make them fruitful in every good word and work, “filling them with the fruits of righteousness.”

The other thought is, that the disposal of the Spirit is with Christ. He is the Spirit of Christ, as the purchase of His death and love. “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.” These gifts of His Spirit it is the prerogative of Christ to bestow according to His gracious pleasure. Let this view not be overlooked. We cannot have the Spirit of God otherwise than by coming to Christ for Him. In vain we seek Him elsewhere. Only in Christ can He be found of the sinner. Yet is He there for the purpose of being dispensed to sinners. “I beheld, and, lo! in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders,

stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." Jesus still stands in His ordinances, and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" of My Spirit.

III. Special notice is taken of the abundance in which this blessing may be enjoyed. "He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water."

The scene of the Spirit's dwelling-place is now changed. Before we were invited to contemplate Him dwelling in Christ. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." There is He, laid up as in a depositary, where He may always be found. But now we are to think of Him as He is conveyed to the believer. He has been enabled to say, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.—And out of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He has abundant grace; or, according to the text, "out of Him shall flow rivers of living water."

This is a figure very common in the Scriptures. Ezekiel says, "He brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." And John says in the Revelation, "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Both passages are designed to be illustrative of the Spirit as He is conveyed to the souls of men, "in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ." And they harmonize with the words of our Lord, that out of His people shall flow "rivers of living water."

The figure is as just as it is common. A river is exhaustless in its source, constant in its motion, and carries blessings along with it wherever it flows. So it is with the believer in whom the Spirit dwelleth.

This river has an exhaustless source. It proceedeth, as we have heard, from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Infinite perfections compose the fountain in which it springs. Hence, says the Apostle Paul, "in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him." God, in Christ, is the source whence the Spirit comes; and it can therefore cease

to flow only when His power, and wisdom, and love, and truth, shall fail.

As this river is exhaustless in its source, so is it constant in its motion. The Spirit does not stagnate in the mind. It puts all its powers into motion and activity. The understanding is engaged with the discovery of truth; the conscience is roused to keep watch over the interests of the soul; the will is receiving lessons of submission to the disposals of the Lord; the affections are moved by the fear of offending, the desire of obeying, and the love of pleasing God, while the life is occupied in growing conformity to His law. There is therefore progress wherever the Spirit dwells. Agreeably to the vision of the prophet, it may at first only reach the ancles; but thence it rises to the knees, ascends to the loins, and becomes at length a river that cannot be passed over. The believer "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

It follows, that wherever this river flows, it must carry unnumbered blessings in its course. John says, "on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." And Ezekiel tells us of this river, "everything, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live.—And upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Truly we may say, "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." It flows through all its streets, and enters into all its habitations. It brings with it purity, and freshness, and plenty. Nor is it confined to the city, and those who enjoy its privileges. "The waters go down into the desert, and go into the sea; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." The river of the Spirit flows out from the Church upon the world. Its arid waters are thereby refreshed; its barrenness turned into fertility. The believer himself blessed, becomes a blessing. Having freely received, he is impelled freely to give. As he has received good, he does good. And so

verifies the saying of Christ, "out of him shall flow rivers of living water."

IV. A gracious encouragement is held out in the text to expect this abundant blessing. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

This cannot mean that the church had never before enjoyed His blessed influence. David's prayer teaches a very different lesson: "take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And Peter expressly informs us that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." These two testimonies show that the Spirit was enjoyed by the Church from the beginning, in both His miraculous and gracious influences.

It must therefore be in some special sense it is said "the Holy Ghost had not been yet given." And we can be at no loss to perceive what that is. He should be given in the time to come as He had never been given before. He would be so given that it would illustrate and confirm the promise made to believers, that out of them would "flow rivers of living water." It is the abundant outpouring of the Spirit that is obviously meant. In past times He had been given as the dew or the rain; but the time was at hand when He would be "poured out as a flood." The ancient promise would be fulfilled, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." And then it would come to pass that, compared with His plentiful effusions in the gospel age, it might be said "He had not yet been given."

This interpretation is fully confirmed by the actual history that speedily ensued. Christ said to His followers—"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." He then ascended to His glory, and they waited in deep suspense to know what should be the meaning of His words. The day of Pentecost speedily brought the explanation. "As a rushing mighty wind," significant of His power, and as "cloven tongues of fire," significant of His purity, the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were enlightened, and quickened, and sanctified that day, as they had never been before. The change that passed upon them was surprising. Formerly timid and disheartened they now became bold as a lion. They preached the word with unwonted power. The most determined enemies of themselves and of their Master were smitten in their conscience.

They cried out—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were directed to wash in the fountain of His blood whom they had slain. They did so, and their wounded consciences were healed. That day "there were added to the Church three thousand souls." And all these "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They exhibited a model of Christian deportment which it would be the interest and duty of all ages to imitate and admire. And so commenced that economy which is specially known as "the ministration of the Spirit."

It is in these transactions we see the meaning of the text—"The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." It follows that when Jesus was glorified He would be given. He was glorified when He was raised from the dead and ascended to His Father's right hand. And no sooner had He done so than the Spirit was poured out as He had promised He should be. The connection between this glorification of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit is obvious. It was designed to honour Christ. It would teach men to what they were indebted for so high a blessing as the grace of the Spirit, even to the death and resurrection of Christ. It would prove how truly He had spoken, and how triumphantly He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do. It would show them what they might expect if they only had confidence in the risen Saviour. "It is expedient for you, said Christ, that I go away; for if I go away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." The more the Spirit is given and received, the more is Christ honoured. He waits to bestow the Spirit on those who ask Him. As He is conferred, light and love and purity prevail upon earth. "God shall appear in His glory when He shall build up Zion." And this is our encouragement to expect abundant effusions of the Spirit—"That He will be given, for Christ is glorified."

V. It remains now very appropriately to inquire how the abundant effusion of the Spirit may be obtained; and with this inquiry we conclude.

The text is very explicit. Twice it gives us the required in-

formation. "He that believeth on me, saith Christ, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." And, again, "This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive." It is by faith the gift of the Spirit is to be obtained. Believe the word and wait for the fulfilment of the promise, and ye shall have it. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Observe also, not merely is the Spirit to be had by faith, but in the measure of our faith. "According to your faith be it unto you." If faith is feeble, the supply of the Spirit will be small. If it be strong the effusion will be large. Our interest and God's honour conspire to recommend the counsel of James—"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord."

This is worthy of God and of the gospel. Here is the highest of all blessings, the gift of the Spirit. And it may be had by the simplest of all means, by faith. All may have it who will take it freely. Surely we are without excuse. O! let us not do despite to the Spirit of grace. Let us live up to our privilege, and through a strong and simple faith be "filled with the Spirit."

XI.

The Continuance of the Spirit with the Church.

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—JOHN xiv. 16-17.



HE time was come when our blessed Lord should "leave the world and go unto His Father." The announcement of this purpose filled His disciples with sorrow. And to comfort them He delivered the affectionate and tender discourse contained in the three chapters of which that before us is the first. In this discourse a prominent topic is the promise of the Spirit. Again and again he recurs to it. It is indeed the pervading, prominent, and principal subject of the whole address.

In the particular passage now to be considered there is a singular fulness of testimony to the Spirit. We are taught He is to be enjoyed by the Church in answer to the intercession of our Lord—that He will be conferred by the Father as a gift of great value to men—that He shall appear as distinct from the Father and the Son—that His ministry would be perpetual—that He would execute the high office of a "Spirit of truth"—that notwithstanding all these things He would be lightly regarded by the world—but that to the people of God He would be a blessing highly prized and richly enjoyed. All these diverse and important views are brought out in this single passage. They are also enlarged and illustrated in other parts of our Lord's discourse, to which we shall have occasion to advert. And we now proceed to offer such brief exposition of them as our limits may permit.

I. The Spirit was to be given in answer to our Lord's intercession, "I will pray the Father."

In the 16th chapter of this book it is written at the 7th verse, "it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." The necessity of our Lord's death to the enjoyment of the Spirit is here strongly affirmed. If Christ would not die the Spirit would not be given. But if He died the Spirit would be secured. The inference is obvious, that this precious gift was the purchase of Christ's sufferings. Hence it is written, "Thou hast ascended on high ; Thou hast led captivity captive ; and received gifts for men." On the ground of His own death He could ask for the Spirit to be given to His people. And He assures them He would do so, "I will pray the Father."

There are three important lessons deducible from this part of the subject which, however, can only be named.

The first is, that the gift of the Spirit is a proof of the acceptance of our Lord's sacrifice. He staked His success on the exhibition of that proof. He died, rose, ascended, and the Holy Ghost was poured out. The day of Pentecost furnished unanswerable evidence of the triumph of the Saviour's work.

The second lesson is, that we have now the strongest encouragement to expect and ask for the Spirit. Our prayers are seconded and presented by the intercession of Christ. While we ask, and what we ask, so does He.

And the third is, that we are instructed how alone the Spirit can be obtained. It is through the atonement and intercession of Christ. Thus sought we are sure to be successful. But if sought in any other way we must be disappointed.

II. What Christ asks in His intercession the Father is delighted to bestow, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter."

While the Spirit is represented as the purchase of Christ, He is also described as the gift of the Father. And it is important to observe, this is a view very frequently expressed by our Lord Himself. Speaking of this gift before His ascension, He expressly calls it "the promise of the Father." In this very discourse from which the text is taken, He says in one place, "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in

My name ;" and in another, "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." It is obvious He desires to keep up before the minds of His disciples the concurrence of the Father with Himself in the gift of the Spirit.

This view of the subject is of extreme moment, and deserves our marked attention.

It teaches us, that the Father equally with the Son and the Spirit, desires and delights to bless the human family. It is an utter misrepresentation of our evangelical views, when it is said we make the Father inexorable and severe until He is pacified by the Son. No. It is truly said of Him, "He desireth not the death of the sinner." He longs for his return. He mourned over his fall, and in love provided for his recovery.

Yet it teaches us also, that in bestowing the Spirit it needs to be in a way that will be in harmony with His law, and character, and government, and the honour of them all. When no other way would suffice, He gave up His Son. Even at that sacrifice He would save the sinner. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "He saw there was no man, and wondered there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation, and His righteousness, it sustained Him."

What a blessed view therefore this whole dispensation now gives us of our unspeakable privilege. We are instructed that every obstacle is out of the way by which the Father might be hindered from conferring upon us the highest favour which sinners are capable of enjoying. He has Himself made a provision by which He can impart to us of His Spirit, in a way alike honourable to Him, and profitable to us. And it is upon the ground of it that Jesus has addressed these encouraging words to all who will hearken unto Him, "if your Fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The Son prays, and the Father gives the Spirit.

III. When through the intercession of Christ the Spirit would be given by the Father, He would be manifested as a distinct person in the Godhead, presiding over a distinct dispensation. In the text our Lord denominates Him "another Comforter."

It is clear He holds Him forth in contrast to Himself. The

Son is not the Spirit, nor is the Spirit the Son. The Son would depart, and the Spirit would come in His stead. And the church would be advantaged by the change.

It is equally clear, that the Spirit is distinguished from the Father. The Father is not the Spirit, nor is the Spirit the Father. The Father would give Him, He would send Him, He should proceed from Him. This last expression may mean that He proceeded essentially from Him in His Godhead. Many so understand it. We do not at present inquire into this mystery. It certainly does mean that He proceeded from Him on His great mission to the earth. And this is enough for our present purpose to show the distinctness of the Spirit.

How clearly are the great doctrines of the gospel implied in the very style and manner of the Scriptures. They are assumed. We have here an example of it in the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Assuming that doctrine to be true, it makes many passages to be plain, which would otherwise be inexplicable. It removes difficulties out of our way which could not otherwise be overcome without wresting the Scriptures.

It is very encouraging also to learn the part that is especially assigned to each person of the Godhead in the work of salvation. It invests the subject with supreme importance to find that each has a peculiar place in it. Not to go beyond the text, the Son purchases the Spirit, the Father gives the Son and the Spirit, and the Spirit saves the sinner. What a work it must be, and how securely and well provided for, when it is thus undertaken.

And yet there is a perfect concurrence in the work between the persons of the Godhead. They are often exhibited in this gracious harmony. Thus, at our Lord's baptism. The Son stood forth to assume His ministry; the Spirit came upon Him as a dove; and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven—"This is my beloved Son." The same is observed in the form of baptism—"baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And so also in the Apostolical benediction—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." Often the different parts of redemption, as well as of providence and creation, are ascribed indiscriminately to the several persons of the Godhead. This is to manifest their harmonious concur-

rence in the blessed work, while yet each has His own special place to fill and His part to act.

IV. This perfect dispensation of grace, under the ministry of the Spirit, is to be perpetual. "He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." This is a most weighty and blessed truth. Let us consider it for a moment.

All previous dispensations had been only preparatory. This is true of the antediluvian, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and even the personal ministry of Christ. In all these the government of the Church was expressly in the hand of the Son. Each succeeded the other, as the sun advancing to his meridian splendour. But when the Sun of righteousness did set in His glory, the preparatory dispensations were ended, and that which constituted the perfection of them all arose under the title of "the Ministration of the Spirit."

This ministration is to last for ever. There will be no other economy. It is sufficient. It offers a reconciled God, an all-sufficient Saviour, and a gracious Divine Spirit. Nothing more is needed by the children of men. The Father will never recall the proposals of His love and pardon in the mission of His Son. The Son is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And the Spirit's office never ends. "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

This dispensation will be eventually successful, as it is essentially effectual. Under it the world will be subdued to Christ. Let its provisions be only faithfully applied, and they shall assuredly prevail. This is the announcement of the prophet—"I saw an angel fly through heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." It is followed by the total overthrow of error and sin, and the universal triumph of truth and righteousness. Let only these means be used as they ought to be, and this end shall, doubtless, be gained. "The nations shall be blessed in Christ, and all nations shall call Him blessed."

Nor can we overlook the application of this precious dispensation to the individual believer, as well as to the Church at

large. To every one of them the promise is made, "He shall abide with you for ever." He takes up His abode in the heart, and He never leaves it. "Ye are the temple of God; and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." The evidences of His indwelling may be more or less conspicuous according as He is more or less faithfully served. But one essential mark of the reality of His work in any soul is its perseverance. And so sure as He has done His gracious work in its regeneration, He will continue it in its sanctification, until grace is completed in glory. "He shall abide with you for ever."

V. He will abide with the Church and with the believer for ever in the blessed character of "the Spirit of truth."

Two titles are given to Him by our Lord in the text, which it is instructive to notice—"the Comforter, and the Spirit of truth." The Comforter is a term of far more extensive signification than that in which we are accustomed to employ it. It means an advocate, who undertakes and manages our cause. The remarks of Dr. Adam Clarke are comprehensive. "The Holy Spirit is thus called, because He transacts the cause of God and Christ with us; explains to us the nature and importance of the great atonement; shows the necessity of it, counsels us to receive it, instructs us how to lay hold on it, vindicates our claim to it, and makes intercessions in us with unutterable groanings." These are just observations, and show that the two terms, "the Comforter and the Spirit of truth," are very much of similar import. It is as the Spirit of truth He is the Comforter and advocate. Let us therefore inquire how He may be regarded under this gracious title.

He has revealed the truth. The word of God has proceeded from Him. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." What a gift is the word to man! It is a perfect revelation of the divine will, chiefly on the matter of salvation. It makes known the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Not merely, however, has He revealed the truth in the written word; it belongs to Him to open the mind to apprehend it. He exhibits the object in the word, and then He gives an eye to perceive it. Without this influence the revelation of the truth

is in vain. However clear and brilliant, the sinner cannot discern it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." As it was with the Jews, so it is with all men—their minds are blinded in the reading of the Scriptures until the vail is taken away by the Spirit.

Nor does He merely enlighten. He brings up truth seasonably to the mind. Christ says, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." Whether for warning, or consolation, or direction, or encouragement, He calls up some Scripture promise, or example, or threat, or precept, and so presents it that it determines the right course of conduct.

He thus makes it the great instrument of advancing the holiness of the believer. "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." He brings home its counsels to the heart, so that they are carried out in the life. It may be said in every such case, "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It is made to answer its design, and to be "profitable for doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

He employs the truth. The Athenian philosopher exclaimed, "give me a fulcrum, and with my lever I can raise the world." The fulcrum of the Spirit is "the truth as it is in Christ." By means of it He will elevate this earth to the dignity of true enlightenment and enjoyment. Purifying the hearts and lives of men, He will elevate them to the dignity of which it is written, "righteousness exalteth a nation."

And we must add He demands truth. He requires it in the inner parts. Falsehood is contrary to His nature, and hateful to His sight. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Their equivocation was regarded as a sin specially against the Spirit of truth, and He resisted and avenged it in their sad and sudden destruction. He is the Spirit of truth, not only in all that He communicates to us, but in all that He receives from us. There must be sincerity in our prayers, singleness in our aims, simplicity in our plans, and purity in our pursuits. Let us never forget we have to do with Him who is eminently "the Spirit of truth."

But alas! how is He commonly received among men? This question leads us to notice—

VI. Notwithstanding all that has been said, He is lightly regarded in the world. Our Lord distinctly warns us, saying in the text, “whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.”

How strong are these terms. “The world” is spoken of, and it is so mentioned to prepare us for what would be the general spirit and practice of men. “Whom it cannot receive.” Not so long as its spirit is what it is. It is proud and unholy, but humility and purity are the channels through which the spirit must enter. “It seeth Him not.” This is the reason why it does not receive Him. It desires an evidence of His existence and grace with which it shall not be furnished. It would have the evidence of carnal sense, but God will give only that of His own testimony and our experience. “Neither knoweth Him.” There is no other way in which the world can have an acquaintance with the Spirit. The two are contrary, the one to the other, so that they do not coalesce in sentiment or practice.

Alas! what proof of this treatment of the Spirit is furnished by the whole history and actual condition of the world? All who have observed must have seen how the subject of the Spirit is regarded by it. To a large extent it is banished from it. It does not occur to men. How little has been written or spoken upon it in comparison with other topics. How seldom is it introduced in ordinary conversation. When it is mentioned, it is usually for the purpose of raillery or merriment. There is no doctrine that has been so extensively the butt of ridicule as that of the Spirit. No doubt much has been done to provoke that ridicule by false friends. But even this is only another proof how extensively the doctrine has been dishonoured.

Let it be observed, however, this takes place in the world. That is the scene of the desecration. It is full of blindness and impurity, and this subject is therefore distasteful to it. “Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” But there is a very different class who give it as different a reception. We, therefore, proceed to notice in the last place—

VII. The promise of the Spirit is one highly prized and richly

enjoyed by the people of God. Christ says to His disciples "but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

These words are as emphatic as those with which they are contrasted. "Ye know Him." Ye have the acquaintance produced by the experience of His power and love. "He dwelleth with you." Their hearts are His chosen home. "And shall be in you." Not a visitant for a day, but a companion throughout life.

This statement is verified by the history of the church, and of every true member of it. The doctrine of the Spirit has ever occupied a prominent place in it. To the child of God it has been a precious theme. He feels that to the Spirit he owes all he is, and has, and hopes to enjoy. Is he a believer? It is because he has been born of the Spirit. Has he made some attainments in the divine life? "By the grace of God I am what I am," said one, and all say the same. Does he hope to be kept unto life eternal? It is because he is "the habitation of God through the Spirit." Nor is it his own interest only that is bound up in the doctrine and work of the Spirit. This is the hope of the world. Until He is "poured out" sin and sorrow must continue. He therefore prays for the Spirit for Himself and others. And heartily does He acquiesce in the testimony of Christ, which we have now considered, "I will pray the Father." Let every one determine to which of these two classes he belongs.

XII.

The work of the Spirit in the World.

"I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."—JOHN xvi. 7—11.



CONDESCENSION and tenderness, united with firmness and faithfulness, are conspicuous features in the character of Christ. In His farewell discourse to His disciples, they are peculiarly marked. How tenderly He says to them—"because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." Yet how firmly He warns them, "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." With faithfulness He tells them what they must suffer, but with condescension He explains to them the necessity and final advantages of their sorrows. It is in this spirit He pours out the words of the text—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

It need scarcely be remarked that by "going away, and departing," He means His death. He takes this way of presenting an unpleasant subject to their attention. And how important the doctrines that are involved in His word. 1. He must die that the gift of the Spirit may be obtained for the church. 2. His death would secure that unspeakable blessing. 3. The Spirit so obtained would be at His disposal. And 4. When given He would convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment.

I. The death of Christ was essential to procure the gift of the Spirit. This is strongly asserted in the text—"it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

In judging of this necessity, it is important to bear in mind for what purposes the Spirit was to be given. He should be given to unfold to the understanding and apply to the heart the redemption of the Son. This, however, He could not do until that gracious work was completed. But the essence of that work lay in the death of the Son of God. "Without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin." "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It could not be more strongly asserted, that in both the purpose and plan of God, as well as in the absolute necessity of the case, salvation could not be secured for sinners, otherwise than by the death of the Saviour. The divine will is represented as having been shut up to that necessity. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." No such law had been given nor could be given. The only way to life for the sinner was through the death of the Saviour. This was the great subject on which the Spirit should treat with men. His work was suspended on the Saviour's work. The one was preliminary to the other. The undertaking of the Spirit assumed that the work of the Son should be accomplished. If the blessings of the Spirit were in any measure granted by God and enjoyed by the sinner, before Christ had actually suffered, as undoubtedly they were, it was in virtue of the work which He had engaged to do, and would assuredly accomplish. They were bestowed because the divine counsel guaranteed the ground on which they should be given, which was the death of the Son of God. This, therefore, instead of weakening, increased the necessity for the death. Blessings had already been given in virtue of its merit, as if it had already been accomplished. And therefore we can fully enter into the force and propriety of our Lord's words, when He says so decidedly, "if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you."

II. The reverse of this statement is equally true—that the death

of Christ would secure the mission of the Spirit. "If I depart, I will send Him unto you."

There is a peculiar force in the term which our Lord employs—"it is expedient for you." It is as much as if He assured them it would be for their advantage. They enjoyed great blessings by the personal presence and ministry of Christ, but they would be increased by His departure and the substitution of the Spirit. We can see many ways in which this advantage would be gained, and we may briefly advert to them.

The work would then be actually accomplished on account of which, even when it was only undertaken, the gift of the Spirit had, from the beginning, been conferred on the church. The wisdom, grace, truth, and holiness of God would be vindicated. And the blessing hitherto enjoyed would be continued.

It would be more than continued, for it would be encreased. It was in reference to this larger effusion of the Spirit, it had been said—"the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

The Spirit would then be enabled to conduct His mission in a way different from that which He had previously pursued. Hitherto He announced the coming and purpose of the Saviour, but in future He would testify to His appearing and the completion of all the work which He had undertaken. He would bear witness to the truth of the Saviour's own words, addressed in prayer to His heavenly Father—"I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Such operations of the Spirit on the minds of men would be better for them than the personal presence of Christ. They involved, indeed, all the advantages of that presence with those of the Spirit's superadded. Even the presence of Christ failed to save many of those who enjoyed it. It was the Spirit that rendered it effectual in any case. He could accomplish the same gracious office without the Saviour's presence. It was His part to enter into the minds of men and fill them with His light; to touch their hearts and quicken them into life; to sanctify their nature and make them anew in Christ Jesus; and to guide, protect, and govern them along the path of life. All this He would be in a position to accomplish, after the death of Christ, such as He had never enjoyed before. It would be done both more effectually and more generally than heretofore. And hence, with the utmost truth might our Lord assure His disciples

"it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

III. Let us consider the import of these last words—"I will send Him unto you."

They obviously mean that the disposal of the Spirit was with Christ. And this sentiment may be illustrated by a passage in 1 Peter i. 10-12—"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." It is to be observed the Spirit is denominated the "Spirit of Christ." He is justly so called as having been purchased by Him and placed at His disposal. In this disposal He sent Him to the early Church in the ministry of the prophets, thus anticipating His own work and preparing mankind for it, and afterwards He sent Him by the Apostles in more abundant measure. Let it be remembered, also, how it is stated by the same Apostle, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient in the days of Noah." Christ sent the Spirit to the Antediluvians by the ministry of Noah, as He sent Him at a later period to the Jews by the Prophets, and finally to Christians by the Apostles. Thus the historic evidence is complete that the disposal of the Spirit is, and ever has been, in the hands of Christ.

And let it only be added, for what gracious ends does He send Him, as these are set forth by the Apostle Paul. "He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the

stature of the fulness of Christ." His design in the disposal of the Spirit is to collect His church and build it up, through the ministry of the word, visiting it in its individual members, and their relation to one another, until every man is presented perfect in Christ Jesus, and all shall constitute one "glorious church," complete in Himself, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." This view however, will come out more fully while we consider—

IV. The work assigned to the Spirit in the text, "when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

It is necessary to observe here, it is the work of the Spirit upon the world that is spoken of. The text says, He would "reprove" it. In the margin, the word is rendered "convince." The meaning is, He would vindicate Christ against the world. He would show the world it had used Him unjustly and cruelly. He would make it feel it had acted toward Him madly and sinfully.

This work He commenced in a signal manner on the day of Pentecost. According to the promise of Christ He was then poured out in a mighty effusion. The Apostles addressed themselves to His murderers under that influence. And you know what were the effects. They cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were reproved. They were convinced. They were led to see they had proceeded most injuriously against Christ. They confessed they had done so. In the fullest measure they were convinced of their sin in having put Him to death, of His righteousness in all that He had said and done, and of the Lord's judgment in now acquitting and honouring Him while He condemned and judged them.

Thus had the words of Christ an early and manifest accomplishment. But they have never since been forgotten. They are acted upon still. The Spirit carries on the work which He then began in the world. It remains for us, therefore, to consider in what manner He yet performs it. And in the elucidation of it we shall follow out the views that are given largely and clearly in the text itself.

1. "He shall reprove the world of sin," and this He explains saying, "because they believe not in me."

The sentiment is plain that the world had sinned in rejecting Christ as the promised Messiah and the Saviour of men. The proof that they had done so is, indeed, abundant. They had withstood the evidence of ancient prophecy. For the space of four thousand years the world had been in preparation for His coming. The plainest predictions, the most illustrative types, and the most instructive institutes had all pointed to Him. Such was their impression at the time that He had become "the desire of all nations." Yet when "He came unto His own, His own received Him not." His own life was a still more clear and impressive testimony. His discourses were such as to cause the remark, "Never man spake like this Man." His actions were such as to lead all men to say, "He hath done all things well; He maketh the deaf to hear, and the blind to see." His whole character exactly accorded with all that had been foretold respecting Him. Yet they would not receive Him. They were disappointed when they should have been satisfied. They rejected Him when they ought joyfully to have received Him. They cried out, "Away with Him, crucify Him," when they should have embraced Him with gratitude and confidence. They now saw their error. Under the powerful convictions of the Spirit they felt their sin. And they bowed down under the rebuke of the Apostle, when he said, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain."

This solemn view of their case is not without serious application to us. We may be guilty essentially of the same sin as these Jews. It is unbelief. This consists in not accepting Christ for a Saviour. It may appear in the form of indifference and entire neglect of His salvation. In that case, the soul may be speaking "peace, peace, where there is no peace." Or it may appear in the form of deep and anxious concern, which yet is not satisfied with the salvation of Christ. It is quite possible that in this modification of the sin, all the blame may professedly be cast on ourselves, and an acknowledgment made of Christ's sufficiency. But it is an acknowledgment that ends in nothing. Christ is not received in faith. He is offered freely, fully, and now. But something hinders His acceptance. That is unbelief. Its foundation is in the pride and sin of the human heart. The

Spirit of God reproves it, and asserts the salvation of Christ. When He does so effectually, He convinces of sin.

2. "He will reprove the world of righteousness;" and the explanation is, "because I go unto my Father, and ye see me no more."

The reference here is to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the evidence thereby furnished of the manner in which He was regarded by God. This is put in contrast with the treatment He had received at the hands of men. They had esteemed Him a malefactor, and to prove how they despised and hated Him, they nailed Him to a cross. They selected the most cruel, cursed, and ignominious death which the malice and ingenuity of man had ever devised. On the contrary, God raised Him from the dead, called Him up to His own presence, publicly owned Him before angels and men, and, in proof that He had so honoured Him, He poured out the Holy Spirit, as Christ had promised, and confounded the guilty men who had imbrued their hands in His blood. Heaven justified Him when earth had condemned Him.

This is a blessed contemplation. Think what is implied in the acceptance of Christ by His Father.

It is an announcement to men that His work was completed. On the cross His last words were, "It is finished." Having so said, He "bowed His head and gave up the ghost." When He arose and ascended to heaven, it was as if the heavens reverberated the words that had been uttered on the cross—"It is finished." God declared He was satisfied. A sufficient atonement had been made for sin. The guilty might be pardoned for His sake.

More was implied. He was Himself accepted, as well as His work. But consider in what capacity He was raised, and now accepted in glory. It was as the representative of His people. "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." When He was accepted and admitted, all who should believe were accepted and admitted in Him.

Nor does even this exhaust the blessedness thus secured. He is gone to heaven, and "appears in the presence of God for us." He is "at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us." We have, therefore, access to God through Him. We may say,

"Seeing we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession—let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

All the blessings of grace are secured by the acceptance of Christ with the Father, from the first operation of grace in the soul to the final glorification of the resurrection-body. To assure us of this rich provision, the resurrection and ascension of Christ have been so triumphantly attested by the Spirit. In the face of an unbelieving world, Jesus asserts, and the Spirit makes good His words, "He will reprove the world of righteousness, because I go unto my Father, and ye see Me no more."

3. One other work the Spirit should do. "He will reprove the world of judgment," which is explained, "because the prince of this world is judged."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter thus triumphantly appealed to the men who had ascribed Christ's miracles to the power of Satan—"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." And then he adds, after quoting another prophecy, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." He asserts and proves the elevation of Christ to universal supremacy. The world and the prince of it are put beneath His feet. This dominion is affirmed in the Scriptures with great emphasis and repetition. And the resurrection is appealed to as its undoubted proof. "He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." "He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him."

This is a blessed supremacy for us if we put our trust in Christ. Men are subject to Him. None can injure us with-

out His permission. The world is subject to Him. The elements are the instruments of His power. Angels are subject to Him. The good are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation." The evil are restrained by His authority or employed in His wrath. Satan was overthrown by Him in His ministry, by His death, by His resurrection, and now he is obliged to yield to His growing influence, though not without a desperate resistance, until he shall at length be cast out, and shut up in his prison-house, and "tormented day and night, for ever and ever." Of this final victory, the Spirit gave the world a proof and a foretaste by the resurrection of the Son of God—"convincing the world of judgment because the Prince of this world was judged."

What warning and encouragement are thus mingled in the work of the Spirit toward Christ, that we may be induced to come to Him and be partakers of His salvation? He shows us that it is sinful to reject Him—that it is blessed to accept Him—and that no enemy can prevail against those who put their trust in Him. Be persuaded to taste and see that He is good, and rest not until you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.)

XIII.

The gradual revelation of truth by the Spirit.

"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: or He shall not speak of Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come."—JOHN xvi. 13.



IN this farewell discourse of Christ there is a singular variety and richness of sentiment. Let us only trace the thoughts suggested by the text as an example. "When He,"—the great and gracious being of whose work He had been speaking in "reproving the world of sin, and righteousness and judgment,"—"the Spirit of truth," who alone fully knows, reveals, and applies "the truth as it is in Christ Jesus,"—"when He is come," implying there is a sense in which He had not yet come, even in that abundant measure in which He should be poured out after the ascension of our Lord—"He will guide you," as a traveller is conducted through a perplexed and unknown wilderness—"into all truth," discovering more to the world than it had previously known—"For He shall not speak of Himself," of His own separate counsel, as Christ also said, "my doctrine is not mine but His that sent me"—"Whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak," all that was determined in the counsels of the Godhead should be made known—"And He will show you things to come," manifesting that all things are known to Him, even to the end, and preparing the Church for that which lay before it. All this wide extent of truth is presented in these few words. Truly "never man spake like this man."

It is, however, not our purpose to enter into these several views. Many of them have been considered already. There is one leading sentiment to which our attention shall be confined—the gradual revelation of the truth by the Holy Spirit. That this is the prominent subject in the passage is plain from the preceding verse

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” In this connection it is added, “howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come.”

There are two principal applications of these words to the work of the Spirit; the one to the gradual completion of the sacred Scriptures; and the other to the gradual revelation of Christ, and His truth contained in them. The former we shall merely notice, and dwell more largely on the latter.

I. The Scriptures were gradually perfected by the Holy Spirit.

It is assumed that He is their exclusive author. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The book bears upon it the impress of His hand. Its depths of wisdom, its divine doctrines, its heavenly principles, and its holy objects, proclaim its original.

How interesting is the history of its production. It was carried on through a period of about two thousand years, from the time of Moses to that of John the divine. The different writers may have numbered from thirty to forty. They were of all classes and conditions of men—statesmen, shepherds, fishermen, physicians, kings, learned and ignorant, high and low. Each wrote independently of all the rest. Their styles, in every instance, are various; and every one adopts that which is natural to him. Yet there is no discrepancy in all their teaching. They inculcate one system of truth. Every succeeding writer adds to what had been taught by his predecessors; but no one contradicts anything that had been made known before. It is totally different from anything that ever appeared among men. Look at the history of philosophy, and every writer seems to arise only to dispute and destroy what all who went before him sought to establish. It is to a large extent the same in all the branches of human learning and literature. But not so the Bible and its inspired authors. They all harmonize. They illustrate, confirm, and recommend one another. They spake manifestly by one Spirit. The Holy Ghost raised them up, and qualified them for their work. He added one to another until

He revealed all that it was necessary for man to know. Like Himself, His work was perfect. Men are therefore warned neither to add to it, nor take from it. It contains all necessary truth; and our business is to increase in the knowledge of it. The canon closes with these solemn words, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

II. As the Scriptures themselves were gradually carried to perfection, so was the revelation of Christ and His truth which we find to be contained in them.

Their great subject is Christ; and the chief encouragement we have to study them is their discovery of Him. So He says Himself—"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Their discoveries of Him are gradually developed as the minds of men were prepared to receive them. The Church has had the stages of its infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood. Something was known of Christ before He appeared as "God manifest in the flesh." More was disclosed by far, when, "in the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." But still deeper and clearer discoveries succeeded, and were designed to be made when Christ would be personally withdrawn, and the ministration of the Spirit would begin. And it is to this Jesus refers in the text,—“when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth—and He will show you things to come.”

Let us trace the discoveries that have been made of Him from age to age in the holy Scriptures.

The first announcement that was made of the Son of God to men appears to have been by means of an oral communication. God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." The great outlines of the truth were here traced, yet very generally, though distinctly. There should be a Saviour—He should appear in

human nature—and He should overcome the wicked one in and through suffering. On this first revelation, probably without many if any more of a similar kind, the faith of the infant Church was sustained throughout the antediluvian age.

There was then, and afterwards, however, another method of instruction—by sacrifice. This appears to have been very early introduced. It is probable our first parents were divinely directed to it. And it is certain that Abel, their son, presented it with acceptance to God. While the previous oral communication was well-adapted to the infancy of the Church, instruction by sacrifice was a happy method of impressing the knowledge which had been imparted, on the heart and memory. It was addressed to the eye. Through it a powerful appeal was uttered on the condition of the sinner, his guilt and danger, and exposure to death, while yet a hope of pardon and favour was symbolized by the accepted service.

In a subsequent age this method of instruction was reduced to a perfect system under the Mosaic economy. It had prevailed under the Antediluvian and Abrahamic dispensations, but in perfection “the law was given by Moses.” To instance a single arrangement, observe the various kinds of sacrifice recorded in the beginning of Leviticus. There was the burnt-offering, a lively emblem of the death and atonement of Christ; the meat-offering, an expression of thankfulness by the dedication of our property to God, claimed, given, and accepted through the merit of the burnt-sacrifice; the peace-offering, significant of the fellowship thus produced between God and the penitent sinner; and the sin-offering and peace-offering, both designed to inculcate the duty of habitually watching against sin, and carrying it continually to the fountain of atoning blood that had been opened for sin and uncleanness. With the light of our times cast upon that dispensation, we can discern under its multitudinous forms, a complete system of evangelical truth. But even under its own light we can readily discover how the worshipper would be exercised with both penitence and faith.

Under all dispensations there is another means of instruction through which light has always been poured on Christ and His truth. Prophecy has ever been employed to present Him to the faith of the Church. Its light has been gradual, but sensibly increasing. The first great prophecy announced Him as a man,

to Adam, under the title of "the seed of the woman." Another proclaimed Him to Abraham, as a descendant from the nation that should spring from him, so that in "Him all the families of the earth should be blessed." His birth was afterwards limited to Judah, a particular tribe of the nation. Then to the family of David. Next it was foretold He should be born of a virgin. The time was determined by Daniel, and the place by Micah. So had the rays of truth been converged by prophecy to one point, that all eyes were turned towards its brightness, and all men were in expectation of the long promised and expected Redeemer.

In the meantime, a great auxiliary to both sacrifice and prophecy was employed in the records of history. These occupy a large place in the inspired volume. The history of the world is there given in its great outlines. We are indebted to this single volume more than to all compositions beside for whatever knowledge we possess of mankind. It is here we have the record of the creation, of the origin of the human race, the diversity of languages, and from this source alone can we obtain any information on these and kindred themes. The great subject of Scripture history, however, is the Church, and that is given in minute details. Its most distinguished members are traced through their whole career. The legislators, the kings, the priests, the prophets, and the people, are all made to pass in review before us. And while an intense interest is thus awakened, our edification is greatly promoted. The history of any people is instructive. It is a development of human nature. We learn more of man from it than from any other source, except our own careful observation. But the history of the people of God is peculiarly instructive. In their example we see truth in action. Principles are presented in the living deportment. We see the dangers to which they were exposed, the evils into which they fell, the consequences of unfaithfulness, the way and means of their restoration, their joys and sorrows, their infirmities and graces. All "these things are written for our instruction, that we through faith and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." We learn to "be followers of them, who through faith and patience now inherit the promises." Particularly, if at any time we lose the communion of our great example and guide, so as to inquire after Him, "saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"

we are directed, "if thou knowest not, go thy way to the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids by the shepherds' tents." In the foot-prints of other days, and other servants of the Lord, we may discover the paths of peace and prosperity.

Especially, it has pleased the Spirit, in this wonderful book of divine composition, to unfold the exercises of the devout soul in its habitual communion with the Lord. The Song of Solomon may well be counted "the song of songs." The lamentations of Jeremiah are the purest emanations of a heart in bitterness for the affliction of Zion. But the Psalms of David are a boon to the church which no language can describe. Their writer was prepared for his work, by being carried himself through scenes of trial and consolation, incident to all generations. His engagements under them are recorded, that others may be sustained or directed by them. How many have had reason to say of these compositions, "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage?" The Psalms are, it is specially to be remembered, full of Christ. They celebrate His kingdom, as in the second; His humanity, as in the eighth; His resurrection, as in the sixteenth; His death and sufferings, as in the twenty-second; His triumph, as in the hundred-and-tenth. No wonder Jesus said, "all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Psalms concerning Me." These carry the soul up to Him in all its changing moods, whether of joy or sorrow. They impress the heart with the deepest emotions of a well directed devotion. They impart to all the advantages of experimental religion. They help us to joy in God our Saviour.

Nor is our Divine Instructor yet exhausted in the methods of His teaching. He has had recourse to another, more effective than any to which we have yet adverted. He has given us the life of Christ Himself. He has done so in a way expressive of the high importance which He attaches to it. In the separate history of four of the attendants of His ministry, He has presented us with a full portrait of our blessed Lord. If one tells more particularly the history of His humanity, another reveals more fully the glories of His divinity. We are thus brought into immediate contact with Him who is emphatically the truth. We hear His instructions. What discourses He delivered! His simple parables have exercised an influence over the human mind wherever the tide of civilisation has borne the volume that

contains them. We have seen His works. In them His perfections and character are presented to our admiration and confidence. We have become acquainted with His life. Its privacies are revealed. We see Him in secret, spending whole nights in prayer; in the family, in the temple, and in the streets of the great city. It is impossible to learn of Him, and not feel the force of the apostolic counsel, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And we see that it would be the height of human greatness and excellence to "grow up into Him in all things as the Head."

Even the life of Christ, however, did not end the teaching of the Spirit. He has given us one inspired book in the New Testament, which may be called the ecclesiastical history of the infant Church of Christ. It is a record of the contest of His truth with an ungodly world. It discovers to us both its trials and triumphs. It is full of instruction, teaching us what we may expect to encounter in the propagation of the truth, and how we may hope to be victorious. Human nature is ever the same. Truth is ever the same. The conflict between them may be expected to be ever, in its essential features, the same. What a benefit, therefore, to be furnished with this guide by the Spirit of truth, that we may know how to act in furthering His cause in the world.

The Acts of the Apostles are followed by the epistles of the New Testament. These are remarkable compositions. It was, no doubt, to them especially our Lord referred in the text. They contain the most full and clear revelation of truth ever given to the world. Letters were written to the several churches, and instructions given to them suited to their various conditions. How the way of salvation is unfolded to the Romans! How the ordinances are explained to the Corinthians! How the doctrine of justification by faith is defended to the Galatians! How the ministry of the Word is commended to Timothy! How the design of the ancient economy is discovered to the Hebrews! It was of such instructions Jesus said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." The truth is in every part of the sacred volume. But "all truth" is to be found eminently in the concluding portion of the epistles. It is the same Spirit who taught by prophets and apostles. But

He manifested both His wisdom and His grace in teaching men as they were able to bear His instructions. Hence the history of the truth has been that of the Sun of Righteousness Himself, rising in the dawn of the world's history, and progressing through many a dark and cloudy sky, till it burst out in the meridian splendour of the gospel day.

The Spirit has closed the canon with the Book of Revelation. How fitting! It gives us the future history of the Church. Its practical influence is great and good. Like all unfulfilled prophecy, much obscurity must rest on its particular predictions till their fulfilment shall be seen. In the meantime, two great features of the book cannot be mistaken. Heavy trials are to be encountered, but these shall end in triumph. We are thus taught to live in faith and patience. And then, when at last all things are accomplished, as the Spirit of Truth foretold, the universe with one shout must cry, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

In conclusion, there are many lessons deducible from this subject which we can only name:—

1. In learning the truth ourselves, we can expect to discover it only by slow degrees. We must use diligence and perseverance. The Word is put into our hands, and we are to study it continually, praying always to its great Author, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

2. In teaching others, we can expect only the same result, and in the same way. They must have "line upon line, precept upon precept." And we need to be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

3. Whether we learn ourselves or teach others, one great end must be kept in view—to discover Christ in the Word. The written Word is designed to conduct to the living Word. And if we do not find the latter in the former, our labour has been in vain.

4. All efforts must be made in dependence on the Spirit. "Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." "Not by might, nor by power,

but by my Spirit, saith the Lord ; he shall bring forth the top-stone with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

5. We may confidently anticipate the gradual but sure progress of truth in the earth. The little leaven will leaven the whole lump. It is ours to sow the seed and wait for the harvest. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

XIV.

Christ Glorified by the Spirit.

“He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”—

JOHN XVI. 14.



HIS is the crowning work of the Holy Spirit—to glorify Christ. Indeed it has been His constant work; but after the death and resurrection of the Saviour, it was to be more conspicuous than it had ever been before. He glorified Him in the prophecies, and sacrifices, and promises of the ancient economy, all of which pointed Him out to the faith of the Church. He glorified Him in the sinless humanity with which He had clothed Him in the days of His flesh—in the public ministry to which He had set Him apart—in the blameless and benevolent life which He caused Him to live—in the sufferings which He enabled Him to endure—in the triumphs which He gave Him power to achieve over Satan—in the death which He endured, as it is written, “who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God”—in His glorious resurrection, in which it is said “He was quickened by the Spirit”—in His triumphant ascension, in virtue of which He is now “at the right hand of God, where He maketh intercession for us”—and in the wonderful transactions of the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was so poured out as to “convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” In all these ways the Spirit glorified Christ. But the text points to something beyond them. He was to continue to glorify Him; and Christ indicates the way in which He should do so—“He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.” Let us therefore inquire into its meaning.

There can be no doubt that our Lord refers to the spiritual illumination by which the divine Spirit would make men

acquainted with Him. They would thus be led to apprehend Him, to see who and what He was, and what He had done ; so that whereas He had before been treated ignominiously, He would in future be honoured for ever. They would honour Him in the views they should entertain of Him, the affections they should cherish towards Him, the life they should render to Him, the supremacy they should yield to Him, and the praises with which they should encompass Him for evermore. In these respects let me illustrate the sentiment of the text—"He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

I. The Spirit would lead men to glorify Christ by the views which He would enlighten them to entertain of Him.

There is a special reference to this view of the subject, by our Lord Himself, in the verse succeeding the text, which is full of meaning—"All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." It implies there is in Christ that which no human eye can discover until it is opened by the Spirit of God. Hence, when this discovery was on one occasion made to Peter, our Lord congratulated him thus—"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." At another time He said, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Again, He said, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Both these two last weighty sayings were expressed by our Lord in the exercise of prayer to His heavenly Father, thus clothing them with the greatest solemnity.

What are the views of Christ to which the Spirit thus opens the minds of men? They appear to consist in a saving discovery of His mediatorial person, and work, and offices.

1. His mediatorial person. This is very wonderful. It lies at the foundation of all the sinner's hope. By it a Saviour is provided sufficient for the great emergency. And as might be expected, the references to it in the divine word are many, and of deep signification. Isaiah says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon His

shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." John the evangelist says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.—And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Paul says, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." And all may be summed up in the simple but sublime announcement—"without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh." The constitution of the mediator's person, as intimated in these passages, is the most astonishing fact in the universe. John said, when it was revealed to him, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." No other Saviour will satisfy an awakened and convinced sinner. This discovery is fitted to do so fully. It reveals a being infinitely able to save. At the same time, being clothed in humanity, He is fitted to take the sinner's place, and to answer in his stead. It is well when the soul is awakened to feel the necessity of such a Saviour. And when its deep anxiety is met by the discovery of Him under the illumination of the Spirit, it may well be captivated with His sufficiency, and exclaiming, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"—thus "glorify Him."

2. His mediatorial work is in harmony with His glorious person. Both are referred to by the apostle when he says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." He took our nature in order to take our place. A man must appear the representative of man; and so the Son of God became man. In that nature He undertook to answer whatever claim might be against those whom He represented. His work consisted in fully meeting that claim. The dishonoured law must be vindicated; and He did so by bearing its penalty. "He magnified it and made it honourable." Its requirements must be met, and He yielded them all. He obeyed it perfectly. The consequences are a full remission of guilt to all who come to Him, and acceptance in the sight of God. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Now, "God is

just, and the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus." Whenever the convinced sinner sees this truth, he is satisfied. He can then say, "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We who have believed do enter into rest." It is therefore the Spirit's gracious work to make this discovery to the awakened soul. How many have thus attained to "peace in believing." And so, resting their sure hope on a foundation that can never fail,—the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, they have "glorified Him."

3. The same may be said of all His offices. The Spirit leads His people into a constant fellowship with Him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. They have full confidence, and therefore honour Him in them all. As their unerring Prophet, they yield themselves entirely to His teaching, and do not lean to their own understanding. As their great High Priest they repose in the completeness of His sacrifice, and look continually to His intercession on their behalf, founded upon it, so that they know it must prevail. And as their Almighty King they place themselves under His protection, devote themselves to His service, and follow Him wherever He is pleased to lead them, as "the Captain of their salvation."

It need not be said how honourable such views as these are to Christ. But it is well to be reminded that the Spirit of God alone can impart them aright. "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." How blessed to know this is the very work He has undertaken. We have only, therefore, to look to Him, that we may be enlightened. Let us cry as David did, "O send forth Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles; then shall I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." As we are so exercised we participate in the promised blessing of the text, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

II. The Spirit glorifies Christ by the affections which He causes His people to cherish towards Him.

These are most honourable to Him as the natural results of the views which they entertain of Him. They may be summed up under faith, gratitude, love, hope, and joy. Let these be severally noticed.

1. Faith. It is written, "they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." And this may be understood generally of confidence in God, or particularly of reliance upon Jesus Christ. In the latter sense the Apostle Paul does not hesitate to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." He believed in Him on the testimony that had been borne to Him. He knew Him by his own experience. And uniting these two sources of acquaintance with him, he did not hesitate to commit his precious soul to His keeping, nor had he any fear of its safety amid all the perils of life, and death, and judgment, and eternity. Thus the Spirit glorified Christ in the faith which He caused His servant to exercise in Him.

The same may be said of the gratitude which He excites in the mind of the believer. How honourable its expression by David, "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, healeth all thy diseases, redeemeth thy life from destruction, crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." He had no language adequate to express the sense he entertained of the obligations under which he had been laid to Him. Hence he cries out, "what shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" If we were only to indulge the consideration of them, as the Psalmist did, we might be drawn into his gratitude. The Spirit would touch our hearts as He did his, and we would pour forth our acknowledgments to the honour of Christ. He deserves it at our hands, and it would be edifying and comforting to ourselves, as well as honourable to Him.

Especially is love due to the honour of Christ. He demands it with great earnestness. He addresses the same question to every one who professes to follow Him as He thrice did to Peter, "lovest thou Me." And He expects the same answer, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Does He not deserve it? Think of what He is, the Son of God, and yet, through love to us, the Son of man. Think of what He has done, reconciling God to the sinner, and on that ground reconciling the sinner to God. Think of what He does, "ever living to make intercession for us." Think of what He has promised, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Think of what He will do,

"I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." All these things the Spirit has testified of Him. By these He inflames the souls of His believing children, so that they cry, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." And thus He glorifies Him.

Hope is kindred to love. Wherever the former affection is placed, it assumes the existence of excellences, from which we have expectations of good. Even the love which a parent bears to a child, implies the hope he entertains respecting him. As for Christ, He is eminently the hope of His people. He is so denominated again and again, "O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble!" We are exhorted to fly for refuge to "the hope set before us." And when we do so our exercise is thus described, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." The soul is a brittle bark on the troubled sea of life. Amid all its perils it casts out the anchor of hope. And thus kept secure it waits till the storms of life shall cease, when it may enter safely into the port of everlasting peace. There is thus no present evil under which support may not be found in Christ. He can, and will, we know, interpose in due time. We may, therefore, say with the Psalmist, "I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in His word." "We are saved by hope." The Spirit presents the Saviour, as "the bright and morning star" in the most dark and troubled hour of life's tempestuous heavings. So glorify Him.

Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark;
The ocean yawn'd—and rudely blowed
The wind that toss'd my found'ring bark.

Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death-struck, I ceas'd the tide to stem;
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease;
And through the storm, and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of peace.

Now safely moor'd, my perils o'er
I'll sing, first in night's diadem
For ever, and for evermore,
The star, The star of Bethlehem.

He elevates them to joy in Him. How rich the words of the Apostle Peter—"Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." All the sources of joy are here—present blessedness and a future inheritance. Present blessedness springs out of faith in Christ, and the more He is contemplated the greater it becomes, until faith passes into joy. And a future inheritance is already anticipated, even a salvation from sin in all its evil and consequences. The earnest of it is given now, and the full possession is in reserve in eternity, when the heir of glory shall become fully and for ever possessed of an inheritance which is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." The deliverance from past evil, the enjoyment of present security, and the prospect of future blessedness thus conspire to fill the soul with joy.

In the exercise of such affections great honour is rendered to Christ. There is a measure in which they may be directed to the creature. We may have confidence in a friend, we may be grateful to him, we may love him, we may have hope from him, we may rejoice in him. As we do so we honour him. These affections imply our conviction of corresponding graces in him to call them forth. And so it is towards Christ. Just as these graces are exercised toward Him we give Him honour. The stronger our faith, the more lively our gratitude, the warmer our love, the more elevated our hope, and the higher our joy, in the same proportion we give Him glory. It is, therefore, the office of the Spirit to produce and increase them. And as that is done the text is verified—"He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

III. The Spirit glorifies Christ by the life which He induces His people to live for His sake.

This is the very demand which Christ makes of them. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." He announces the great end at which they should aim, and declares the means by which it shall be accomplished.

The appeal of the Apostle Paul is to the same effect. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify

God in your body and spirit which are His." He puts them in mind of the powerful obligations under which they were laid to prosecute such a purpose.

It is one, too, in which the believer joyfully acquiesces. He can say—"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

And when the life is so governed and spent how honourable it is to Christ. With what triumph the Apostle could say to the Corinthians—"Ye are our Epistle known and read of all men." This is a testimony which none can misunderstand. It is an argument which none can answer. A holy and consistent life is that which best puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men. It adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour. The Spirit ever reiterates the command, therefore, "follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." And as this is done He glorifies Christ.

IV. The Spirit glorifies Christ by the supremacy which He claims and secures for Him among all the creatures of God, and which He will engage them at length to confess and render.

He is now supreme over every heart that is given to Him. Its language is—"Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and flesh doth faint and fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

He is now supreme over His own Church. "I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion." He said, in this sense, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The laws that shall govern the Church must be His laws. Its ordinances must be His ordinances. He is its only head and king.

His supremacy extends to the world also. God "hath given Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." God revealed Him to the prophets in His glory, and He tells us "He hath on His vesture, and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

He is supreme over other worlds as well as our's. "He is

gone into heaven ; angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto Him.”

All this He anticipated when He said—“ Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” The Spirit would reveal Him in the fulness of His majesty. Then “ every knee would bow to Him ” in heaven and on earth, and so would He glorify Him.

V. The Spirit will glorify Christ by the praises which shall compass Him about for ever.

In the magnificent description of heaven in the Apocalypse, it is said, “ The Lamb is the light thereof.” All the rays of its glory converge and centre in Him.

The songs of His redeemed people are given, and they all reflect His praise. To Him they shout, “ Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

Nor are they alone. It is said, “ He shall be admired in His saints, and glorified in them that believe.” By whom? No doubt the angelic hosts are meant. They look on redeemed men, and honour and glorify their Saviour. Hence their song, too, is given—“ I heard the voice of many angels—the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands—singing, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Nor does even this bound His praise. It is added—“ Every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

When all this takes place, then, and not till then, shall the work of the Spirit be fully completed, as it is announced in the text—“ He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

This is a subject of deep personal and practical interest to us all. Let us, therefore, conclude with an application of what has been said.

1. If we would glorify Christ, we must be taught by the

Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Let us ask Him to be our teacher.

2. If we would glorify Christ, we must be quickened by the Spirit. "The carnal mind is enmity against Him." We need to be "renewed in the Spirit of our mind." And we should seek an interest in the Apostle's prayer—"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

3. If we would glorify Christ, we must be sanctified by the Spirit. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. If we would glorify Christ, we must submit to the supremacy which the Spirit claims for Him. The demand is, "Yield yourselves unto God." The will of Christ must be our will, as it respects ourselves or others, the Church or the world. We must say, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."

5. If we would glorify Christ, we must be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light" by the Spirit. He must put the new song into our mouth, and inspire our hearts to sing for ever—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Christ Present in His Ordinances by the Spirit.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—MATT. xxviii. 20.

"We will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him."—JOHN xiv. 23.

"The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—JOHN xiv. 26.



CHRIST promises ever to be present in the ordinances of His Church. From the context and other portions of the Divine Word, we learn this presence is vouchsafed through the Spirit. But before proceeding to consider how He is thus present, it may be instructive and seasonable to notice the view that is given, in the first passage read, of those ordinances in which the spiritual and gracious presence of Christ may be expected. At the 18th verse, He lays down a principle which needs to be carefully observed. "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." We must understand Him to speak of the mediatorial power granted to Him in the government of the Church. His words amount to an assertion that such power belongs to Him exclusively and supremely. In the exercise of this power, He proceeds to institute ordinances. His words assume the form of an inference from what He had before said. Since the power has been given to me, I proceed to exercise it. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He appointed the preaching of the Word and baptism. His directions are the most minute. All things must be done according to His command. And when His ordinances are so observed, He promises, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

That this presence is to be understood of the Spirit is not merely intimated in the context, but is distinctly taught in our Lord's farewell discourse. As we have seen in previous discourses, a prominent feature in that most blessed address is the promise of the Spirit. And it is after one distinct announcement of Him it is said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." How would the Father and the Son make their abode with the godly man? Obviously by the Holy Ghost, as it is written, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" It is, therefore, assumed that Christ is present in His ordinances by the Spirit; and we proceed to inquire how such presence is to be understood and realised.

I. First, then, Christ is present in ordinances by the Spirit as a witness to the truth.

This sentiment is distinctly expressed by the Apostle John in his 1st epistle, the 5th chapter, at the 8th verse, in these words:—"There are three that bear witness in earth—the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." By the Spirit is obviously meant the Holy Ghost; by the water, the ordinance of baptism; and by the blood, that of the Lord's Supper. The Spirit bears His testimony in the Word preached, and He also employs both Baptism and the Supper to explain and confirm His testimony, for it is said "these three agree in one." Let us consider what the testimony is that is thus constantly borne to us in the ordinances.

1. Christ is present by the Spirit to testify to the truth in the preached word. As God said of His ancient people, "ye are My witnesses," so may it be said of all who preach the gospel. Their testimony comprehends the whole circle of truth, but all their doctrines converge into one centre, Christ crucified. Hence saith the apostle to the Corinthians, "and I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." "The testimony of God," and "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," are identified. In other words, the great subject of God's testimony to man, is Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And how exactly

this corresponds with the inspired account of the apostolical ministry, addressed to these same Corinthians in another epistle, "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The minister of the word is in Christ's stead. He is His ambassador. Christ is present by His testimony, and in it beseeches sinners to be reconciled to God.

2. Christ is present in the ordinance of baptism, to testify by the Spirit to the same truth. What is presented to the ear in the preached word, is addressed to the eye in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The credible truth of the one is the visible truth of the others. And it is amazing, how in these simple ordinances such an extent of truth is exhibited so clearly and fully. Look into that of baptism: It is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. What then is necessarily implied in such a formula? It assumes that an act of worship is addressed to the persons who are named. But acceptable worship can be presented to God only. It follows, therefore, that each of these is God. Yet there is but one God. We are thus at once conducted to the Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead. Nor is it merely that they are so revealed to us, for while their deity and unity are disclosed, they are also exhibited in the gracious relation of each sustaining a part in the economy of redemption, and all uniting to save the sinner. Nor is it the formula alone that is instructive. The figure of water is not less so. It brings out other corresponding truths. It needs to be applied; consequently there is defilement; and so we have a testimony to the doctrine of human depravity. It is applied, assuming there is efficacy to remove defilement in that of which it is a symbol; that is the blood of Christ; and thus we have a testimony to the sufficiency of His atonement, even that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." At the same time, in the sign of water, we behold an emblem of the Spirit, whose work it is to apply the blood of Christ to the conscience of the sinner. Thus we have a testimony to the great spiritual change of which He needs to become the sub-

ject. "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Besides, all are to be baptized, the youngest as well as the oldest. The infant of eight days old must needs be circumcised, and in the corresponding ordinance, baptized, as well as the adult and the aged. Here, then, is a testimony to the doctrine of original sin. And, not to dwell more largely on the rite, it need only be added, that it is a witness equally clear to the adoption of sinners into the family of God, and so, a badge of the Church of Christ, and of all the privileges of its membership. It is obvious, nothing short of divine wisdom could have constructed an ordinance so simple, and yet so significant of the great cardinal doctrines of the gospel of Christ.

3. The same remark applies to the Lord's Supper. There is a close affinity between the two sacraments, and yet the greatest variety. They testify to the one truth, but each has its prominent features. In both there are the same doctrines, but they are seen under different aspects. We have looked into the glass of baptism, and seen its reflections, and shall now do the same with the Lord's Supper. Nor need we go beyond the simplest contemplation of its significant emblems. Our attention is called to our Lord's words, saying of the bread which He held in His hand, "this is My body." The fact is thus assumed that He had a body. He who is essentially the Son of God, became in His mercy to us the Son of man. Thus in this most simple sign we have the great fundamental doctrine of our Lord's incarnation. He is presented to the eye of our faith, as "God manifest in the flesh." Not only, however, did He say, "this is My body," He added, "this is My body which was broken for you." And to give force to His words, He took the bread, and broke it before their eyes. In this we behold His work, as in the bread we behold His person. He suffered and died in the humanity which He had graciously assumed. He thus made an atonement for sin. And we are taught to express our hope in the language of the prophet, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Nor is this all. The bread thus broken, was presented to the disciples with these words, "take, eat." We must eat that we may observe the ordinance. It instructs us, that in order to profit by the work of Christ, we must participate of Him. Eating is emblematic of

faith. Christ said, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." And His words are equivalent to another saying, "he that believeth shall be saved." There is a lesson, too, in the fact that these simple rites are observed by the people of Christ in union with one another. The communion is one of the names by which the ordinance is known. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we drink is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The rite is thus a testimony to the church of Christ and its fellowship. And we may add, there is instruction in the fact, that before our Lord dispensed the elements which were on the table and in His hands, He lifted up His soul and His voice in prayer to God. The act reminds us, that even this ordinance, appointed and administered by Christ as it was, could be of no avail, except through the blessing of God. The mere rite was nothing. The bread might be broken and eaten, but unless the blessing of the Lord accompanied it, the soul would not be nourished. We may well apply to this institute what Christ said on another occasion, "My words, they are spirit and they are life." But in the hands of the Spirit how fitted they are to be our instructors. In these simple arrangements we behold, when the eye of faith is opened to discern the Lord's body, the person, and the work, and the salvation, and the church, and the Spirit of Christ. In the Lord's Supper, as in baptism, we trace the whole circle of gospel truth. And when they are viewed unitedly, they are a clear exposition and a strong confirmation of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They are lights suspended over the word, written or preached. And as they cast their reflections upon it, it is brought out more distinctly and vividly to our apprehension. It is thus Christ may be said to be present in ordinances by the Spirit as a witness to the truth.

II. Christ is present in His ordinances by His Spirit to apply them with power to the heart and life.

The promises to this effect in the Divine Word are exceeding great and precious, and they may be found under all dispensations. Thus under the ancient economy it was declared, when the arrangements for the Divine worship were completed—"There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the cherubim which are upon the

ark of the testimony." More generally the promise ran—"Wherever I record my name, there will I come unto thee and bless thee." A special assurance is given to any one connected with the ordinance, that he shall be qualified for his part in it, or made to possess the blessings it was designed to convey—"I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread; I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." In plain terms our Lord says—"Where two or three are met together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them." And in the text—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Let us therefore inquire how Christ may be said to be thus present in His ordinances.

It must not be supposed it is by any necessary connection with them. The ordinances may be observed, and He may not be present. Many complaints are uttered in the Divine Word because of His absence from ordinances. The Church seeks for Him, crying—"Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" It cries out in anguish of spirit—"O, the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger among us and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry but for a night." This, let it be remembered, may be true of all the ordinances. The word may be read or preached, while yet the living word is not present in the literal word. Baptism may be administered while regeneration is not effected. Instead of a blessing it may possibly be that a curse attends the ordinance. The same may be true of the Lord's Supper. It was so with the Church at Corinth. The apostle says—"Ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse." All ordinances may prove to be not only ineffectual but injurious. And, no doubt, it is to render them so that the great deceiver has so generally prevailed to persuade men that to secure the ends of the ordinances they need only to be observed, that baptism is regeneration, and that to eat the Lord's Supper is to partake of Christ the living bread. An awful delusion by which many souls have perished!

Christ is present in His ordinances, simply and solely by His Spirit. This is true alike of them all. The preached word becomes effectual only when it is applied by the Spirit. The sacraments in like manner, "become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in Him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of God, and the working of

His Spirit in them that by faith receive them." Nor is it by any mysterious and inexplicable process that the Spirit renders the ordinances profitable. It is in a way patent to our reason, and often discernible by our senses. We may understand it and explain it. We may feel it in ourselves, and behold it in others. Let us then, more particularly, examine in what ways it is that Christ is present in His ordinances when He renders them effectual by His Spirit.

1. He is thus present when He enlightens the mind to apprehend the truth which is presented in them. It is said of the Jews—"Their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ." Again, "when Moses is read the vail is upon their heart." And here is the remedy. Observe how completely it is in the hand of the Spirit, and He applies it as a Spirit of light. "When it shall turn to the Lord the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Let us learn to wait upon all ordinances, praying—"O send forth thy light and truth, let them lead and guide us." For as the clearest page of the printed book cannot be read by us until the sun sheds his rays upon it and us, so neither can the plainest truths be seen in the simplest ordinances until the Spirit shall shine with His light upon our understanding. "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

2. Christ is present by His Spirit in His ordinances when He imparts power to our souls to obey the truth which we discover in them. "We preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." "For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in you also that believe." These testimonies are applicable to the truth, however it may be presented to the at-

tention, whether in the word preached, or in the sacraments. It becomes effectual in any, or in all, in the same way. The same remark applies to its influence in either beginning or advancing a work of grace in the soul. We believe at the first, and we become strong in faith afterwards, just as the Spirit brings the word to us with power. Of all this we behold an example in the proceedings of the day of Pentecost. The word was preached; and under it the awakened cried out, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" The ordinance of baptism was administered to them, and its celebration is thus described—"Then they that gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." So also was the Lord's supper observed; and the account is, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The result of all was that these early converts presented a lovely example of true godliness. "All that believed were together, and had all things common—and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house; they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." So it is still. The presence of Christ is found in His ordinances when sinners are convinced and converted, when believers are edified and comforted, and when thus the kingdom of God is promoted in the one class, or the other, or in both, by the gracious and powerful influence of His Spirit.

3. There is a peculiar manifestation of Christ's presence in His ordinances when He imparts His Spirit either, on the one hand, for judgment, or, on the other, for consolation. Both are often needed, and they are not withheld. There is a reference to the former, when it is said, "gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God is judge Himself." So also in the parable of the marriage feast we are told the king came in to see the guests, and having detected the man without the wedding garment, He commanded him to be cast into outer darkness. Over the Lord's Supper the inscription is written, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." In accordance with these views, the ordinances of God's house have ever been a principal means of

detecting and destroying sin in the people of God, and so they have served the purpose, of judgment. Nor have they been less for consolation. The gracious words of Jesus have often been realized in all their power and tenderness—"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Thus He fulfills His promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

How deeply humbled should we be in the consideration of this subject! With this precious promise to plead, how satisfied have we often been without the tokens of the Saviour's presence in His ordinances? Alas, it may be said of many, "Having a form of godliness and not the power." God might justly say to us, "bring no more vain oblations." "This people draweth nigh to me with the mouth, and honoureth me with the lip; but their heart is far from me."

Let us be roused to consider, and plead, and enjoy our privileges. We may have the presence of Christ in His ordinances, for He has promised it. Let us never be satisfied without it. As often as we observe them, we should expect and desire that He would shine into our minds with the light of His truth—that He would quicken us by His power, that He would advance us in the attainments of godliness; and that He would add to His Church such as should be saved. It was so in other days, and it may and ought to be so still. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear." Let us cry with the ancient church, "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Manasseh, and Benjamin, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved." Thus we realize the promise, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Part III.

THE TESTIMONY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT IN
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES;

OR,

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN THE ORGANIZA-
TION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

I.

The Spirit Essential to the Establishment of the Christian Church.

"And, being assembled together with them, (He) commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence—But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts i. 4, 5, 8.



IN the Old Testament Scriptures, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit began to be revealed. Contemplating it in the light of the New Testament, we can discern, in the earliest revelation, all the great outlines of the precious truth more clearly discovered in subsequent times. In the gospels, the subject is more fully and frequently treated. Especially we are led to consider it in connection with the person and history of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, when we proceed to the Acts of the Apostles, there is another great advance in the revelation of the Spirit. Full and distinct testimony is borne to Him in sixteen out of the twenty-eight chapters of which this book is composed. It may truly be said of His path in the Scriptures, that it is as that of the sun, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

In the text, this branch of the divine testimony to the Spirit is opened with great point and solemnity. He is called "the promise of the Father." To it the attention and hope of the Church had long been directed. And in the fulfilment of it, the largest gift of a Father's love would be enjoyed by His children. The writers of the Old Testament, as well as our Lord and His Apostles, had taught believers to look forward to it as the consummation of their hope. For this the disciples of Christ were charged to "wait." They were not to depart from the place where they then dwelt until, in a signal manner, they saw how

His promise of the Spirit should be begun to be fulfilled. That auspicious commencement, Christ assured them, should be witnessed "not many days hence." Till then they should hold themselves neither qualified for the work in which they were to be engaged, nor authorised to enter upon it. But no sooner would the promise be made good, than they would be rendered adequate to the duties of their commission, and would enter upon them vigorously and successfully. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In the present discourse, your attention is called to the command of Christ to "wait for the promise of the Father;" and it may be shown that it was seasonable, necessary, effectual, and instructive. O! that we may be enabled to enter on our present engagement, to unfold the doctrine of the Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles, in the spirit that is suited to this command of our Lord!

1. It is seasonable.

The circumstances in which the disciples were at this time placed were peculiarly solemn and trying. Their Lord had been taken from them by a violent death. True, He had appeared among them again miraculously. But it was only occasionally, not abiding with them as He had done before His death, and they had been warned that He was to be withdrawn from them permanently, so far as His bodily presence was concerned. How seasonable, in such circumstances, was the promise of the Spirit, couched in such terms as our Lord employed to describe it.

There is abundant evidence that the disciples had been greatly discouraged by the death of their Master. Plainly as He had told them to expect it, and affectionately as He had sought to comfort them under it, it is plain they were not prepared for it. How despondingly the two who accompanied Him to Emmaus, not recognising Him, said to himself, "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." They needed in some remarkable manner to have their hopes assured.

Besides, on what a stupendous enterprise they were to be engaged. They knew little of it at the time. Had they been aware of it, they would have shrunk from it with dismay. Moses trembled to undertake his mission to go to the king of Egypt

and demand the liberation of his people. Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord when he was commanded to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Jeremiah excused himself when he was called to exercise the office of a prophet, saying, "Ah! Lord God, I cannot speak, for, behold, I am a child." What, then, would have been the consternation and despair of the disciples had they been fully aware of the high duty now laid upon them?

They were to be the founders of a new dispensation. A total change was to take place in the divine economy toward men, and they were to be the agents of it. It was such as would give violent offence to the prejudices of their countrymen, and raise the enmity of mankind against them. Had they known the fearful precipice on which they were at the time standing, they would have started back appalled at the sight.

One feature of the new dispensation, creating the utmost difficulty, was its spirituality. Christ had said to the woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;" and this great problem was now to be worked out. The Apostles were to address themselves to the reason, the conscience, and the heart of men. Forms and outward ceremonies were to give place to spiritual exercises. A gorgeous economy was to be supplanted by the simplest dispensation, having no attraction for the carnal eye. And of this mighty change they were to be the instruments.

Not only so. The great aim was to bring the whole world under the power of this new and unattractive dispensation. Already the Saviour spoke to them of "being witnesses unto Him to the uttermost end of the earth." If they thought upon His words at all, what idea can they have attached to them? They had been educated in Judaism, and while they understood the adhesion to their religion which they had often witnessed in proselytes, they had no apprehension of the duty of going forth on a mission to seek the subjection of all nations to the obedience of the faith. The thought of it would have overwhelmed them.

Need more be said to prove how seasonable was the command of Christ in the text? We read in the book of the Revelation, "when He had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour." How solemn the pause! It was befitting the occasion. A mighty work was about to be done in the earth. Before it should be entered upon, the atten-

tion of all the inhabitants of heaven was summoned to consider it. In like manner, our Lord claimed the attention of His disciples. We can conceive of nothing more suitable than His words to arrest it. They were plain enough to be understood, yet they contained much of which they could form little apprehension. They must have filled their minds with the deepest concern.

There is a singular proof in this conduct of our Lord, that in "Him dwelt the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He brought the minds of His disciples, by His significant words, into the very attitude in which it was most desirable they should be found. They knew enough to elevate their highest hopes, but they did not see how they were to be realized. They were made to feel that both themselves and their cause were in the hand of God. They were drawn into constant prayer. They cried, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have us to do?" They obeyed His word, "wait on the Lord ; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart ; wait, I say, on the Lord." How seasonable then was the command of Christ.

2. It was necessary.

Without the promise of the Spirit the disciples were entirely disqualified for the great work to which they were now called. They were few in number. Not more than a hundred and twenty were found to assemble after the death of Christ as His followers. All the rest who had been somewhat influenced by His ministry, appear to have made shipwreck at the cross. Not only were they few in number, but almost none, if any, appear to have been persons of station or influence among their fellow-men. They were humble in their circumstances, and had none of the outward qualifications that gave promise of efficiency. Worse than all this, they laboured under the greatest mental and moral disqualifications. And to perceive how necessary the command of Christ was to them, it may be well to notice particularly some of their marked infirmities.

How slow they were to learn the truth. Considering their opportunities we are amazed at their dulness of apprehension. They had possessed the Scriptures of the Old Testament from their childhood. They had been accustomed to a constant attendance on divine ordinances. They had occasionally been favoured with the ministry of distinguished men, such as John the Baptist.

Yet we find the Lord saying to them, after His death and resurrection, when it might have been supposed the events which had taken place would have cast light on the doctrines which they had been taught—"O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And they had need to have their own Scriptures explained to them, so that it is added, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Such persons were utterly incompetent, with their present attainments, to be the teachers of mankind.

Worse than ignorant, they were timid to a great extreme. They dreaded the popular displeasure. We are told, "among the chief rulers many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." How full of sagacious reproof, entering into their very hearts, were the words of Christ, "how can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" No doubt these passages show the condition of the public mind; but alas! even our Lord's disciples were largely infected by it. We learn on one occasion, when Christ had plainly taught His spiritual doctrines, "that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." He was so affected by what He saw, that He said unto the twelve, "will ye also go away?" To this touching inquiry, one of them, more forward and bold than the rest, "Simon Peter, answered, To whom Lord can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet how did this same Peter act when our Lord's troubles came upon Him, and He was arrested under a judicial accusation? He "followed afar off," to the hall of judgment whither they dragged his master. When at length he crept in there, hoping to escape unknown, and was challenged with being one of His followers, he denied in the most solemn manner all knowledge of Him. Nor was he singular in his cowardice and unfaithfulness. When Christ was brought up to the bar of judgment, it is asserted by His historian, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled." These were not likely men to brave the scorn and persecution of the world in claiming it for Christ.

They were still more disqualified by their earthliness. The worldly disposition of their countrymen had a fast hold on the disciples, nay, on the apostles themselves. How humiliating is this record, "then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, what wilt thou? She saith unto Him, grant that these, my two sons, may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom."

Nor was this merely the desire of a fond and keen mother. It is clear she had been employed by her sons to use her influence with their master, for we are informed of what proves they were inculcated in her guilt; that, "when the ten heard it they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." They were jealous of them; every one of them perhaps having ambition to desire or expect the same honour.

We learn farther, therefore, that they were contentious in their intercourse with one another. Pride, ambition, and worldliness must ever beget quarrels. So in point of fact is it recorded to have been with them. Mark tells us that, on a certain occasion, "being in the house, He asked them what was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way." And he adds in explanation, "they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." They were ashamed of themselves, and good cause they had to be so.

All this considered, it is not to be thought strange that their ministry had hitherto been unsuccessful. They little understood it; they had not much heart in it; they wanted alike unity of purpose themselves, and of counsel with one another. Their ministry was therefore in the eyes of all men a failure. Should they remain as they were, it must continue to be so. How fitting, therefore, that our Lord should say to them, "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." How necessary the command of the text, and its corresponding exercises—"wait for the promise of the Father—ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

3. As this command was seasonable and necessary, so it contained a promise that was effectual.

It is plain this last lesson of Christ had a mighty influence on the disciples. According to His command, they did "wait for

the promise." They engaged in exercises becoming such a period; for we are informed "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Their engagements and prospects had an elevating, sanctifying, and harmonizing effect upon them. Already there were indications of what would be done for them by the Spirit. The expectation of Him was in itself a blessed influence.

The earnest, however, was small compared with the realization of the promise. In due time it was signally fulfilled. The day of Pentecost is memorable as the period of the greatest effusion of the Spirit. It will be more fully considered hereafter; but, in the meantime, it is seasonable to trace its effects on the disciples. We have seen what they were before it; let us now see what they became after it. The change was the most marked ever seen among men. Properly to estimate it, we must contrast their gracious attainments with their former deficiencies; and when we do so they present a lesson well entitled to the most diligent study and attention of all men.

They had been slow to learn the truth. From the day of the Spirit's descent, however, they became quick of apprehension. Light broke in upon their minds like the bursting out of the sun on a dark world. They saw all things differently from what they had ever done before. They understood the nature and design of the dispensation under which they were placed. They perceived its spirituality and saving purposes. They knew their own position in it, and their mission under it, to be themselves what it required, and to make others the same. They were then morally qualified for the high commission to be ministers and witnesses to men—"to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ."

They had been timid and fearful either to receive the truth themselves, or proclaim it to others, lest they might incur the displeasure or provoke the persecution of the world. No sooner, however, had the Spirit come upon them than we are presented with this scene in their history. "They called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto

God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." One passage may be cited as descriptive of their spirit and power. "When they had prayed, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." They spoke to men as the messengers of God. This consciousness of a divine commission, as well as a divine illumination, made them valiant for the truth. They feared God, and therefore they did not fear man. They were respectful and gentle, but faithful and courageous. They deported themselves as became "ambassadors for Christ."

The practical effects upon their own character were perhaps still greater.

They had been earthly, but they became singularly heavenly-minded. They looked at all things appertaining to time in the light of eternity, and so they judged of them both as it regarded themselves and others. Their ambitious projects were abandoned. Self was overcome. They were willing to bear anything God might require, for the glory of Jesus and the good of men. "They counted not their lives dear to them, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus." They might say with their Master, "the zeal of thine house hath consumed me."

They had been contentious with one another; but now their only rivalry was who should bear most, and do most for the cause that had been entrusted to them. They united in earnest prayers, and holy counsels, and faithful labours, and unceasing sufferings. They constrained men to say, "behold how these love one another." Instances there are of diversities and contentions in their history, showing how difficult it is to subdue the pride of the old man. But, judging them fairly, it must be owned the divine testimony is true—"the multitude that believed were of one heart and one soul."

The effects were such as might be expected. Their word was with power. God owned and honoured them. Men were amazed at them. They were compelled to honour them. Their doctrine filled the land. Everywhere multitudes flocked to the standard of the cross. The despised Nazarene became a title of renown. "They went everywhere, preaching the word, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following." On

one day we read of three thousand being added to the Church. Shortly after we hear the number had reached to five thousand. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." What a confirmation of the remark, that as the promise of the Spirit by Christ was seasonable and necessary, it was at the same time effectual. Then let us consider—

4. Finally, how it was instructive.

The great lessons contained in it are as applicable to us as they were to the immediate disciples of Christ. They are numerous and important.

Without the Spirit we are disqualified for the work of the Lord. We need to wait for "the promise of the Father." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Our first great concern, if we would be the Lord's servants, is to see that we are "the temples of the Holy Ghost."

Not only so. We should engage in every special work only in the strength of the Spirit. It is not enough that we have the Spirit. We need to be enriched afresh by His grace, and so prepared for every good word and work. The disciples had the Spirit before the day of Pentecost. But it was only then they obtained Him in such measure as was essential to their peculiar mission. It is the same rule still—"Out of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace."

Hence the Spirit must be diligently sought. While the disciples waited for Him it was not in indolent repose. They were filled with anxiety, engaged in solemn conferences, and abounded in prayers. We must imitate their example. Christ has laid down the law—"Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Let us remember, at the same time, that the power and grace of the Spirit must accompany all our words and works to render them effectual. It is not sufficient to own the need of the Spirit and ask for Him. We may be His temples and yet fail to honour Him. As there may be faith in Christ, which, though it be our general habit, fails in particular cases to be exercised, so we may be the subjects of the Spirit and yet betimes neglect to speak and act by Him. It is a great and blessed attainment to undertake and do every special work in dependence on the guidance and strength and blessing of the Spirit.

Nor let us conclude without remarking how inexcusable we are if we do not obtain the Spirit to be our helper in Christ Jesus. He is "the promise of the Father." But of all His promises it is said that "in Christ Jesus they are yea and amen." No doubt God is sovereign in dispensing the Spirit, and the Spirit is sovereign in imparting His influence. Yet He is promised, and it is in reference to the promise of Him, Christ has said so pointedly—"Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

In conclusion, how great is the influence which this doctrine should exercise over us. What it should cause us to be—how holy, and pure, and heavenly. What it should cause us to do—to put forth all our energies in the work of the Lord, saying—"When I am weak then am I strong." O! think of the interests that are at stake—our own present and eternal good and the salvation of a lost world. And surely we may well be stimulated to "wait for the promise of the Father" until we are "baptized with the Holy Ghost," and so become witnesses for Christ, at home and to the uttermost part of the earth.

II.

The Day of Pentecost a model of the Work of the Spirit in the Christian Church.

"In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."
ACTS ii. 17.



THE day of Pentecost was no doubt intended to be a model day in the Christian Church. It formed the opening scene of the new dispensation. By an example it gave the world to understand what was meant by "the ministration of the Spirit," of which it was the commencement. O! that the work had continued as it was then begun. So long as Pentecostal times lasted, the Church was extended, and large inroads were everywhere made on the kingdom of darkness. Had they continued to the present time the earth would long since have been "full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Piety, purity, peace, prosperity, would have prevailed universally. Mankind would have been one happy family under the dominion of love to God and love to men. Long since the word of the Lord would have been verified, and "there would be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain of the Lord." Alas! how different the actual history has been. It was soon apparent into what an uncongenial world this gospel of Christ had been introduced. Everything tended to hinder and withstand it. The freshness of the morning soon gave place to the scorching heat of the day, and that was followed by the disasters of the dark and stormy night. Happily the history of that morning has been minutely preserved in the record now before us. It is refreshing to read it. As it tells us of what has been, we learn what may yet again be seen on the earth. We are encouraged to hope that Pentecostal

effusions shall again visit it. To such we look for the introduction of the glory of the latter day. It will, therefore, be profitable to consider carefully the day of Pentecost. And this we now proceed to do by reviewing the history in the chapter that is before us.

Pursuing this course, it may be observed that the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is regarded as the fulfilment of ancient prophecy; as having been obtained in answer to earnest and united prayer; as having been exhibited under external signs, singularly adapted to the occasion; as closely connected with the person and doctrine of Christ; and as accompanied and followed by the most blessed effects. The consideration of these particulars may help us to form some just idea of the day of Pentecost.

1. It is cited as a fulfilment of prophecy.

This is the view at once unhesitatingly expressed by an inspired Apostle. While its extraordinary transactions were before all eyes, he distinctly announced, "This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." He cites one prophet, but it was only as a specimen of many. Similar predictions had been delivered from the beginning. The writings of David and Isaiah abound with them. They were familiar to the Church; and however indistinct the apprehension might be of what would constitute their fulfilment, it was well known and expected that the earth should be visited with some remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit of God.

The terms that are employed are strongly descriptive. They imply abundance and universality. Hitherto the Spirit had been given sparingly, but in the time predicted He should be "poured out." Anything that had yet taken place would be seen to have been only as the few drops that precede the copious shower. Hitherto He had been given only to a few, but in the day foretold He would visit all flesh. Piety and godliness had been rare attainments upon earth, but it was the will and purpose of God that they should prevail upon it.

It was by the prospect of such a day the hearts of the godly were long sustained. From the beginning, it was ardently desired and confidently expected by them. What an outbursting of this Spirit appeared in Elizabeth, and Zacharias, and Mary,

and Anna, and Simeon at the time of our Lord's Advent. It is impossible to hear their gracious effusions, and not perceive the happy influence which had long been exercised on the Church by the prospects that animated it. Their sorrows were thus patiently borne, their prayers encouraged, and their labours stimulated.

And so it is still. We have the same hope set before us. The Word of the Lord is still sure, and, according to it, we look for many a pentecostal day on the earth. The day which did come was given only as an earnest of many more and similar. And the glad hearts of believers will be able to point to them and say, like Peter, "This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel." May the Lord hasten it in His time!

2. In connection with this blessed prospect, however, it is important and instructive to observe that the day of Pentecost was granted in answer to earnest and united prayer.

This is a prominent feature in the history of the memorable day. In the previous chapter there is a record of the names of many of the most distinguished servants of Christ at the 13th verse. And of them it is recorded in the 14th, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Again, in the 1st verse of the chapter before us, it is recorded, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." An impression was obviously on their minds that they might that day look for some remarkable fulfilment of our Lord's promise of the Spirit. Therefore, they were all, without an exception, come together. Nor can we have any difficulty in believing how they were occupied. It might again be said, "These all continued in prayer and supplication." Prayer was their one, harmonious, constant engagement. And thus we are led to the instructive conclusion that it was while their prayers ascended to heaven the Spirit was poured out on the earth.

There was the utmost propriety in such a conjunction. Prayer and the grace of the Spirit are appropriately united. It is only the man of prayer whose mind is in a condition to desire, or realise, or enjoy the Spirit. He expresses at once his own helplessness and his confidence in God. He looks away from himself, and he looks to God. He takes hold of the truth and

mercy of his heavenly Father, pleading His promise, and not doubting He will delight to make it good. Such a spirit is truly acceptable to God; and, therefore, it is while it was exercised, we learn, the day of Pentecost was distinguished by the effusion of the Spirit.

The same is the rule of the divine economy still. The outpouring of the Spirit is suspended on the prayers of the godly. Christ Himself is represented by the Prophet Isaiah to act upon this principle. He presents Him to us saying, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." What He does Himself also He engages His ministers to do, saying, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." And He requires all His people to engage in the same exercise, addressing them, "Ye that make mention of the Lord (or, as in the margin, Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers), keep not silence, and give Him no rest, until He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." It is assumed that when such prayers are offered, the desired blessings will be granted. Pentecostal supplication will assuredly be followed by Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit.

It is a solemn consideration that the prosperity of true religion is thus placed in the hands of the church. Whenever it shall really desire and ask it, the millennial glory will appear. True, this spirit will appear not in supplication only. For when that is sincere, it prompts to corresponding conduct. It produces personal purity and active labours. It makes us at once holy and zealous. When the heart is opened in enlarged desires and earnest prayers, the hand will be opened in generous contributions, and occupied in active labours. And whenever such a spirit shall prevail another pentecostal day shall appear. How solemn, therefore, the responsibility of the church, and of every member of it, with whom it is left to leave the earth unwatered and unblest by the grace of the Spirit, or to have it refreshed and fertilized by His copious effusion.

3. It is time, however, to consider the gift itself. It is exhibited in the history of the pentecostal day under external signs singularly adapted to the occasion, and these we shall now notice.

The history of the effusion is as follows:—"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." There were three signs, and they were most appropriate, both as illustrative of the Spirit Himself, and of His capacity for the accomplishment of the work in which He was about to engage the church.

There was "a rushing mighty wind." The wind is a constant and fitting emblem of the Spirit. From it His name is taken as the term most expressive of His nature and operations. We cannot live without the air. When we cease to breathe it we die. So are we dependent on the Spirit for both natural and spiritual life. It is true of the one as well as of the other, that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Not merely, however, was there on this occasion the wind, but "a rushing mighty wind." This was designed to be significant. It expressed the power of the Spirit. The storm is a fearful outburst of strength in nature. It overthrows and overwhelms the works of man in one common ruin. Nothing can withstand its force if God is pleased to let it forth in the fierceness of its fury. Thus the Spirit is able to overcome all obstacles and opponents. No man, nor any thing he can do, is able successfully to resist Him. And, no doubt, this was the lesson to be impressed on the minds of the apostles by the "rushing mighty wind which filled the house where they were sitting."

Another emblem was fire. This also is habitually used as an emblem of the Spirit. And most appropriately. The fire is purifying. It detects and draws forth the dross from the pure metal. So when the Spirit enters the soul He refines and purifies it. He separates the gross earthliness that clogs the unconverted soul, and leaves the principles pure and holy to rule the sanctified heart. The process may be severe, but it is salutary. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto honour, and praise, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The Spirit is often pleased to use sharp providences that He may purify.

There seems to be an important lesson in the union of these two emblems of the Spirit. Power consists in purity. The storm is accompanied by the lightning, and so the atmosphere is purified. Besides, who or what can resist their united power? Either is irresistible, but together they defy opposition.

It is to be observed, however, that not merely was there fire, but "cloven tongues of fire;" and the interpretation is given with the emblem, that "they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was a singular exhibition, not only of power, but of wisdom. It met at once the great obstacle that stood in the way of the publication of the gospel. How were illiterate men to preach in strange tongues? The Spirit in an instant overcame the obstacle, and qualified them. A test was at hand. Being the feast of Pentecost, strangers from all lands were present to celebrate it. These heard the apostles, and they cried in astonishment, "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." The inhabitants of sixteen different places are represented to have united in this acknowledgment.

What an impression must all this have made on the apostles? They saw the Spirit could furnish them with gifts for the conversion of the world. They could no longer fear to undertake the mighty work. And let it be remembered, we have the same Spirit to qualify the messengers of the cross still. He may not please to do it in the same way, by miraculously conferring the gift of tongues; but He may do it as really by raising up men with large capacities for the acquisition of languages, and blessing their endeavours to make them their own. The world is filled with proofs in our day, when the divine word has been rendered and is now preached in not less than two hundred of the languages of mankind. The day of Pentecost has thus furnished the key that will one day unlock the treasures of divine wisdom for the benefit of the whole world.

4. The work of the Spirit is, however, accomplished in only one way. We proceed, therefore, to observe, that on the day of Pentecost it was closely connected with the person and doctrine of Christ.

The apostles embraced the opportunity presented by the excitement and attention of the multitude, caused by what they had seen, to preach the gospel. The discourse of Peter is re-

corded, and affords, no doubt, a fair specimen of what was spoken by all the apostles. It is a recital of the history of Christ. He dwells on the humanity, the life, the ministry, the death, and the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The resurrection is specially confirmed and maintained. It is shown that it was only in accordance with what their own scriptures had long foretold. The events of the day of Pentecost are appealed to as undoubted evidence of His ascension. "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." And he makes this practical application of the whole subject—"therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

There is much instruction in this apostolic example. The Spirit will acknowledge only the preaching of the gospel. Paul expressed the right view and purpose when he said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." That is the only way in which souls can be converted and saved. That is the lever by which the world is to be lifted up from its degradation, and made prosperous and happy. It might readily be shown how adapted such an instrument is to such a work. The gospel alone is suited to sinners. It takes hold of them in a way by which no other subject can gain access to them. This statement is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of history. The arts and the sciences have failed to reform and elevate mankind. But the gospel of Christ has never failed. When He preached Himself, it is said, "the common people heard Him gladly." At this moment nations are civilized and prosperous in the very measure in which the gospel is understood and obeyed. The Spirit uses it, because it is the right instrument. This is due to Christ, whom He delights to glorify. But it is while sinners are saved, and men are blessed this glory is most promoted. This is Christ's own principle, as He said, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." Let us never separate what God has joined together, the doctrine of Christ, and the effusion of the Spirit.

5. We may well be encouraged to remember this counsel while we contemplate the blessed effects that accompanied and

followed the effusion of the Spirit. These are detailed very fully in the passage, and need only to be recited.

The multitude were convinced of sin, and cried out, "men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Many "received the word gladly." Their prejudices were at once removed, their understandings enlightened, their judgments convinced, and their hearts filled with joy in the knowledge of the truth.

They were "baptized." They publicly professed that Saviour whom a few days before they had crucified. They declared their adherence to Him and His cause, to whatever disgrace and injury it might expose them.

"Three thousand were added to the Church" of such. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power; in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth." In this morning of the Christian Church the converts were numerous, and beautiful as the dew drops of the morning.

"They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and prayers." It was no momentary excitement that stirred them. It was proved to be a gracious, enduring, and sanctifying principle.

"Fear came upon every soul." All who came into contact with them partook of the influence.

"All that believed were together, and had all things common." Sweet communion bound them to one another. They loved Christ and each other for His sake.

"They sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." A spirit of self-denial, and a large-hearted generosity took possession of them, and influenced their conduct.

"They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." A cheerful simplicity reigned in the hallowed circle. They enjoyed God in all the gifts of His providence.

"The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." While the Church was healthful and happy, the world felt its influence, and religion was widely extended. Then was the principle verified, "God shall bless us, and all ends of the earth shall fear Him."

What scenes were these? Would we not desire to see them

repeated? Then, let it be remembered, all this is recorded only as an example of what the Spirit is at all times able and willing to do. In the day of Pentecost there is a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel; but it was only one fulfilment. It shall not be fully accomplished until it shall be over the whole earth as it was that day at Jerusalem. It may not be that the transactions shall be literally the same. This is not necessary. But while the accompaniments may vary, the substantial issues shall be the same. There may be no rushing wind heard, nor fire seen; yet there will be the same Spirit, and the same fruit in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. Let us pray for them as the early disciples did; and labour for them as they did in the proclamation of the gospel; and give of our substance for them as they did in a measure commensurate to the wants of the Church and the world.

No doubt, there are many to whom all such things will appear vain and foolish. But we must not be stumbled by them. There were such on the day of Pentecost. Three classes are mentioned by the historian. Some were "amazed," looking at the work with mere curiosity and surprise. Others "were in doubt," filled with scepticism and suspicion. And not a few, "mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." So it was then, and it is well we are informed of it. There are those whom no evidence would satisfy, and no truth convince. We must not be discouraged by the lukewarmness nor deterred by the irreligion of others.

It was before the eyes of such men, and in spite of their enmity, the triumphs of the Spirit were achieved on the day of Pentecost. We may say to them, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your day which ye will in no way believe, though a man declare it unto you." We have only to turn to the Word of the Lord, and in faith, grounded on its sure testimony, labour, and pray, and wait for the effusion of the Spirit.

III.

Internal Purity required by the Spirit in the Christian Church.

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? — Acts v. iii.



IN an inspired description of the Church by the Prophet Isaiah, Zion is called upon "to lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes." By lengthening her cords is obviously meant her extension or increase—widening her bounds and enlarging her borders. By strengthening her stakes, we are to understand her stability—the establishment of sound principles, and the confirmation of her piety and holiness. Two things are thus set before the Church—her outward and inward prosperity. And they are well presented to our notice, for they do not always proceed together. The Church may be greatly enlarged in numbers, while there is a decay in true godliness and consistency. And we need continually to be reminded that internal purity is even more essential than external prosperity.

The same lesson is strikingly taught in the history of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles. It had a glorious extension on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand were at once added to the disciples. Many more soon declared their adherence also. But there was obviously much danger in this great and sudden growth of numbers. Trying providences are, therefore, used to test the principles of professors. One of these was the dedication of their property to the cause of God. And in the text we are presented with the result in one particular case.

Ananias and Sapphira had declared themselves members of the Church, but when tried, they failed in two essential duties. They were defective in generosity and truthfulness. The latter

is particularly prominent. It is presented to our notice in circumstances most impressive and affecting. It shows the extreme displeasure with which the Head of the Church regards the want of truth in its members. And it leaves upon record a lesson never to be forgotten—that while we rejoice in the outward increase of the Church, we must be no less concerned for its internal purity.

Let us consider this special illustration of the necessity of a strict purity and morality in the followers of Christ as it is presented in the history. The sin of falsehood is exhibited in its nature, its source, its criminality, and its consequences. Let us contemplate it under these views.

1. Its nature. We are informed “Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the Apostles’ feet.”

Observe the parties in this transaction. They do not appear to have been alike guilty. There is a thought irresistibly suggested by the expression, “his wife also being privy to it.” Ananias was, no doubt, the author and proposer of the guilty plan, while Sapphira acquiesced in it. The influence of her husband was superior to that of sound principle, and she yielded to his sinful and mean device. Thus she became a participator in his crime, and though, as we might suppose, less guilty, a sharer in his punishment.

Observe, also, in what their sin consisted. They sold their possessions, and brought a certain part of the price. They do not appear to have said it was the whole price. We are confirmed in this view by the question addressed to Sapphira in the 8th verse, “Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?” It was designed, probably, to test her in two things—whether she was really an accomplice with her husband, and whether she would directly violate the truth. But neither she nor her husband seem to have come forward at the first with a direct falsification. They did not expect any questions would be asked at them, or any investigation made into their conduct. They assumed that what they presented would be gratefully accepted, and so, without any falsehood on their part, as they supposed, they would have the reputation of having acted with the same generosity as the other members of the Church, while yet they

would have in reserve a portion of their property, which might be useful or necessary to them in some future day.

It is important to have this view of their conduct distinctly before our minds. It is essential to a correct apprehension of the nature of falsehood. In their case it consisted not in a direct mis-statement, but in an attempt to gain a certain reputation on a false ground. They did not say they presented the whole price, but their conduct was calculated and designed to produce that impression on the minds of the Apostles and the Church.

We can be at no loss to learn hence what, in the judgment of God, constitutes the sin of falsehood. It consists in a deception, and it may be profitable to trace some of the forms in which it is often found to prevail.

Similar to Ananias and Sapphira, how many members of the church may be enjoying a reputation to which they have no legitimate claim. They unite with their brethren in presenting their offerings to the cause of God. They assume a place similar to that of others who give far beyond the limit of their contribution. They do not say they devote the same, but they act as if they did so. They take their share in the credit that attaches to the common offering. They carry themselves as if they had done as others, and deserved to be honoured as others. No inquiry is made into the proportion in which any contributed, or how far it corresponded with their means. Men do not know whether they brought the whole price or kept back a part. But in the eye of Him who judges the heart, and who dealt with Ananias and Sapphira, wherein did their conduct differ from that of those members of the church, whose deportment we have been describing?

Extending our observation beyond the conduct of men in the membership of the church, how many forms of deception may be practised in society without any direct assertion of falsehood? They may be found in either words or actions. There are words of equivocation, and there are actions of duplicity. Our words may fall short of the truth, where we deal with those who have a right to know the whole truth. Or they may be such as to mislead them in the judgment which they are led to form. Without the utterance of words actions may be deceptive. A man may be avowedly taking his place in the religious exercises of the household, while yet he is indulging secret and known sin. Parents

may be thus practising a deception on their children, or children on their parents. In like manner may it be in any of the other relations of life. Men may not know one another. Their judgments may be the opposite of truth. But to the God of Ananias and Sapphira how must all such appear?

Besides these hidden hypocrisies there is the sin of open and undisguised falsehood. They who practise it do not deceive themselves, but designedly seek to deceive others. This habit discovers a depth of iniquity to which few descend without having long practised it. Either they think not of God, or they have no correct apprehension of His character. Their conscience is seared as with a hot iron. And they may be regarded as given over to a hopeless hardness of heart.

How plain is the course which it is assumed every true member of the church, every real follower of Christ, will pursue? Truth must be precious to him. There can be no departure from it. The strictest veracity is essential to him. It is not enough that there be no departure from it. There can be no deception. Candour, openness, a manifest freedom from all concealment, should distinguish him. Of every Christian it should be said, "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." It is our duty so to act, as to produce this impression. All scheming and secret planning in our dealings with others are unworthy of the Christian. Plainness of speech is becoming in him. Let his conduct be above-board. Let men see that he obeys the rule of Christ, "let your communication be, yea yea, nay nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." We may be assured that in this simple counsel there is a depth of meaning which is not easily fathomed. There is an insight to human nature which the most profound philosopher fails to rival. There is a high honour besides, and a dignity which no other course can ever reach. It is true nobility. It is worthy of Him who uttered it, and it is worthy of all who bear His name. Let it be our purpose to practise it, warned by the example of Ananias and Sapphira.

We have been led into these remarks by the nature of their sin. Let us now proceed and consider,

2. The source whence it is said to have proceeded.

This is very pointedly expressed in the passage. "Why hath

Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" The sin is traced directly to the temptation and influence of Satan.

This assumption is not to be understood as if there were not in man himself a bias to falsehood. On the contrary, it is represented in the Scriptures to be one of those sins that are natural to man. In the 58th Psalm, David says at the 3d verse, "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." This witness is true. His testimony is in accordance with all experience and observation. They who have been versant with childhood know how readily the false word comes upon the tongue. Parents are sensible that the most constant watchfulness is necessary to restrain from this practice, and to form the habit of truthfulness. There can be no doubt that the Scriptures and facts unite to prove that man is naturally false.

But this view is not incompatible with that of the text. Satan knows the natural propensity, and takes advantage of it. There are besetting sins, and he understands well how to ply us with them. These are the weak points by which he enters into the citadel of the heart. We cannot say with Christ, "the Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." He cometh and findeth much in us which He can turn to account for His own purposes. And thus it was that He besieged and overthrew Ananias and Sapphira.

There are two views that may be taken of their character, as it was brought under Satanic power. They may have been unconverted and ungodly. In the spirit of worldliness it may have appeared to them to be a good speculation to connect themselves at this juncture with the disciples. The cause promised to be popular after the day of Pentecost. Particularly they may have been attracted by the community of goods which it was necessary, in the circumstances of the disciples, to practise. It may have occurred to them that money was to be made by associating with them. They might get more than they would give. By pretending to devote the price of their possessions to the common stock they might hope to obtain an equivalent out of it, while at the same time they reserved what at all events would compensate for their loss. This may have been the philosophy of their case. Or it may have been different. They may have been really impressed by what they had heard and seen of the new religion.

They may have sincerely united themselves to the Church. But they had not counted the cost. They had not reckoned on the sacrifices that might be required of them. When the demand came they were not prepared to meet it. They had no desire to abandon the membership of the Church, and were desirous to retain their reputation and standing in it. But they were not ripe for its self-denial. They thought therefore of a compromise. They would sell their possessions, but retain part of the price. They would not commit themselves to a falsehood by saying they gave the whole. But they would lay down what they considered to be prudent, and enough to serve for the occasion. None would be the wiser, for they resolved to keep their own secret. They would thus secure at once their money and their reputation. They would serve both God and mammon. In all likelihood this is the true explanation of their conduct.

It was precisely such a course as Satan might be expected to suggest and further. It is in harmony with all his devices from the beginning of our race. He came to our first parents and he insinuated to their minds false ideas of God. He succeeded to excite suspicions of Him in whom they should have had unwavering confidence. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Having gained this place in their hearts, the poison which he had injected soon began to operate. They did eat the forbidden fruit, and the first form which their sin took was, after the example of their betrayer, that of falsehood. Adam excused himself by blaming Eve. Eve defended herself by blaming the serpent. Neither confessed the sin. Truth was departed from them. They wished to retain their place and reputation, and yet were conscious they had forfeited both. Under Satanic teaching they had become deceivers. A similar attempt, though unsuccessful, was made upon our Lord Himself. Every temptation by which Satan assaulted Him was an aspersion of the Divine character under the garb of rendering to it honour. But if he failed with Him, how fearfully did he succeed with his countrymen. He knew them well, both their hearts and lives, and to their face he drew their picture in these words—"Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his

own; for he is a liar and the Father of it. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." These are plain words, and they trace up falsehood to its true source, the power of Satan exercised on a depraved heart.

The attempt is worthy of Satan, both of his wisdom and malice. Full well does he see that in no way is he more likely to prevail against men, or more completely to involve them in ruin. Falsehood is presented as a convenient and easy relief, but once committed the barrier of the soul's protection is broken down. It is defenceless. Self-respect is gone. There can be no appeal to God. The flood-gates are opened and iniquity comes in with a swelling tide. This view, however, will come out more fully while we consider—

3. The criminality of falsehood.

In the text attention is directed specially to one consideration, but it is a most solemn one, that it is a sin against the Holy Ghost. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost." And again—"How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" There are many lights in which the sin, thus viewed, is seen to be peculiarly offensive.

It is a sin against God. Hence saith Peter—"Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." It is assumed that the Spirit is God, for an offence against Him is an offence against God. The argument must be shown to be irresistible as a proof of both the personality and deity of the Spirit. But our present concern is to exhibit the enormity of the crime. It is an enormity. A lie is a virtual denial of the truth and power and holiness of God. It is uttered in His presence as though He knew it not, did not hate it, and would not punish it. It is incompatible with His omniscience, and omnipotence, and purity, and faithfulness. Its language is—"How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Particularly, falsehood is a sin against the Spirit Himself. This is the view of the text, and it demands a special consideration. Consider then—

It is a sin against His nature. One of His titles is, "the Spirit of truth." It is essentially inherent in Him. He cannot Himself be false, and falsehood cannot dwell in His presence.

It is a sin against His word. The prayer of Jesus is, "sanctify

them through thy truth ; thy word is truth." This is the instrument by which He accomplishes all His purposes ; and He will use no other. He tells all the truth as it regards God and man, sin and salvation, time and eternity. Of such Jesus says, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A lie is the rejection of the truth, and is a direct resistance to the testimony and word of the Spirit.

It is a sin against His work in the heart. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." When God writes His law upon the heart, it is as a standard of truth which He sets up there. Establishing it within us, He entwines around it all our principles, and affections, and practices. He makes us "true men."

It is a sin against the character which He forms in His people. One of their peculiarities is, "He speaketh the truth in his heart." It is not enough that the word is a literal truth. It must be in full harmony with all that is known and felt, and believed by him who utters it.

It is a sin against the believer's safety. The Christian warrior is said to be "girt about with truth." As this girdle encircles him he is strong ; as it is relaxed, he is weak.

It is a sin against his best interests for time and eternity. Where truth is not, there can be no principle. The man is at the mercy of every current that flows in the sea of life, and he cannot but perish on its rocks, or in its quicksands.

It is an offence against society. "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish." These are its fit companions, and this is their united issue ; and in bringing on a consummation so awful, lying occupies not a small place.

How properly then is it represented to be a sin specially against the Holy Ghost ? Against that Spirit who is Himself essentially the truth ; who employs it in all His purposes ; and demands it in all His people. Nor will He lightly regard it, or permit it to pass unpunished, as shall appear while we now notice—

4. The consequences of falsehood.

There is great force in the question of Peter to Sapphira, "how is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord ?" They tempted Him to visit them with His judg-

ments. It is plain this is the meaning, from the events that occurred. The guilty parties were smitten by the hand of the Lord ; and the day of their sin proved to be that of their death and burial.

There was no doubt a peculiarity in their punishment, in so far as it was direct and immediate. But there is no peculiarity in so far as the same sin is now as hateful to the Spirit as it ever was, and shall as certainly be overtaken with the judgments of the Lord.

This may be witnessed often upon the earth. Does the liar ever in the end prosper? He may deceive for a time, but it is not easy to continue to do so. Men detect him ; and once known, his honour and success are at an end. What a complication of difficulties he has created for himself ! Every one is suspicious of him. He is watched and hindered. It is hard, if even possible, for him to persevere and prevail. But if through some favouring circumstances he should be able to do so, still he is hated, and men wait for his halting, when they will triumph over his fall, and rejoice to proclaim his overthrow.

But however it may be in time, there is no dubiety as to the issue in eternity. Of heaven it is said, "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." And of hell it is said, "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." The liar shall not be admitted to blessedness, but he shall be doomed to wretchedness. From all that is good and glorious he shall be cast out ; and to all that is evil and wretched he shall be irretrievably condemned.

We cannot wonder when we find it added to the melancholy history of Ananias and Sapphira, "great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things." The Church was warned by what had befallen a member of it. A lesson was read on the purity to be maintained within it, that would not speedily be forgotten. The world was terrified. It was seen "verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth." The mocker was silenced for a season. And deep solemnity was spread over the minds of all men.


How thankful should we be for the record of this incident. It would be difficult to say how much influence it has exer-

cised on the Church and the world. What mother, not lost to every sense of propriety, has not told her child the history of Ananias and Sapphira? It has impressed many a tender heart, and proved to be a safeguard to thousands, if not millions of the human family. Bad as men are with it, it is difficult to say how much worse they would have been without it. It is placed in the sacred record by its blessed author, the Spirit of truth. Let it be our concern carefully to learn its lesson ourselves, and diligently to teach it to others. Above all, let us recommend it by our example.

IV.

The Work of the Spirit in the Deaconship of the Christian Church.

“Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”—ACTS vi. 3.

“ HIS is the law of the house ; on the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy ; behold, this is the law of the house.” Such is the announcement of the prophet in his description of the Church in the latter day. It teaches us that every thing appertaining to it would be so ordered as to serve the purposes and advance the interests of true holiness. Under all dispensations, indeed, such arrangements had been made for the church as tended to illustrate and enforce its design as a dispensation of holiness. Thus it was in the tabernacle of the wilderness. The various ceremonies proclaimed one great lesson, the necessity and obligation of purity. The ark, the priesthood, and all the services connected with them shadowed forth and claimed a godly life. The inscription on the dress of the high priest was “holiness unto the Lord.” The very ornaments of the simple structures for the worship of the sanctuary taught a similar lesson. Flowers and fruits, “a bell and a pomegranate,” were worked into them as instructive devices for the eye of the worshipper. In the temple this design was carried out still more fully. And in the New Testament Church we find it in perfection. The institutes are few and simple. They supplant the shadowy ceremonies of an introductory economy. But they are wise, and good, and well adapted to the purposes of education. Every thing is laid aside that might tempt the worshipper to rest in a mere external ritual, and all is arranged as is best fitted

to carry out the designs of an institute that has one great object, to make men pure and holy.

In the text we have an example of one of these arrangements in the appointment of deacons. The history is brief and simple, but very instructive. The Holy Spirit is seen to act a prominent part in it. And we may notice, following the details of the passage, the occasion of the institute, the reason assigned for it, the manner of providing it, the character of those who shall exercise its duties, their appointment to the office, and its effects. It will be seen that such an office is well worthy of the Christian Church, and highly adapted to promote its sacred purposes, in the hand of the Spirit.

1. The occasion of the institute. We read in the 1st verse, "in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."

It will be observed the office arose out of necessity. Even in this circumstance there is much instruction. Under Christianity nothing is done for mere pomp and show. It is a system of labour. If work needs to be done, a provision is made whereby it shall be done. But until such a necessity arise, we are reminded that we must avoid the increase of forms, which may only encumber and hinder the work that needs to be done.

In the present case a necessity did arise, and it is at once gratifying and humiliating. It is gratifying to find, that from the very first, Christianity had respect to the poor. Amid the multitude of cares and occupations that came upon the early church, they did not overlook the organization that was essential to provide for their support. From the first, the gospel of Christ gave indication of its great peculiarity as a system of religion addressed and adapted to the poor. In the working of this organization, however, cause for humiliation was soon apparent. It is instructive to notice how it arose out of the very prosperity of the Church. "The number of the disciples was multiplied," and that circumstance gave occasion to the evil. Satan is a vigilant enemy, and turns every thing to account for his unholy designs. Our prosperity he can make the means of our overthrow. In this case all classes had been attracted to the gospel of Christ. Grecians and Hebrews, Jews and Gentiles, were happily united in its fellowship. This was a great triumph. But

the enemy watched his opportunity. These parties had still their remaining prejudices and corruptions. Partiality appeared in the distribution of the charity of the church. This was speedily observed, and made the subject of complaint. The dispute rose so high, and assumed so much importance, that it attracted the notice, and required the interference of the apostles. This gave occasion to the office of the deacon.

It reminds us forcibly of a similar proceeding in the reformation that appeared in the time of Nehemiah. God had given remarkable success to that Reformer. But no sooner did the promise of revival cheer the hearts of the godly than we are informed, "there was a great cry of the people, and of their wives against their brethren, the Jews." The cause was the same as in the beginning of the gospel, a contention about the temporalities of the church. How true is human nature to itself under all economies. It is ever the same, a corrupt thing. What dangers ever arise to religion out of the world and its interests. We need to be on our guard that the evil may not be suffered to prevail, but that by the device of wisdom and equity dissension may be hindered, and the cause of godliness be allowed to pursue its useful course.

So it proved to be on both these eventful occasions. Nehemiah succeeded in stilling the tumult by his seasonable remonstrances and wise conduct. And the apostles embraced the opportunity to institute a permanent office that might take charge of the temporalities of the Church. Good was thus brought out of the evil, and an institute was introduced, that with more or less of purity and faithfulness has continued in the Christian Church till the present time.

Let it not be supposed that because it has to do only with the temporalities, it is of small importance. Nothing is unimportant that is connected with the Gospel of Christ. We are so constituted that our temporal concerns must ever powerfully influence our spiritual character. Besides, in the Church everything should be so ordered as to present an example to the world. It is a disgrace when the corporation of the Church exhibits a worse management of its affairs than the corporations of the world. No occasion should be given for our Lord's reproof that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Everything should be better in the Church than else-

where—better measures, as well as better men. The Apostles thought so, and acted upon the principle. And they gave satisfactory evidence of it when they instituted the office of the deacon.

2. This, however, will more fully appear while we consider the reason which they assigned for its appointment. This is twofold. They say, in the 2nd verse, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables." And again, at the 4th verse, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word."

Noble sentiments! How worthy of the Spirit that animated these men of God, and what an example and lesson to all generations!

"It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables." This did not arise out of any idea of their superior dignity. They were the servants of all men, ready to be, or do, or bear anything that might be for the glory of God and the good of men. Neither did it arise out of any low opinion of the temporal interests of the Church and its members. They fully estimated and admitted their importance. They were no ascetics. Temporalities were important in themselves, and still more so in their influence on spiritual concerns. It arose out of the higher office assigned to them, and the absorbing claims which it had upon them. With these nothing should be allowed to interfere. However valuable the bodies of men were, their souls were still more so. The high vocation of the Apostles was to seek the salvation of souls. To that office they were appointed, and it deserved and demanded all their time and attention. They must beware lest Satan should beguile them from their high calling. They were watchful, and hence their irresistible argument—"It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables."

What a reproof do these words administer to both the ministers and members of the Church in our day. How many of its ministers are occupied in serving tables. It may not be in any case wholly so, but in too many partially. And it is an aggravation of the offence that ministers are too often reduced to this necessity by the neglect of the members of the Church. The latter will not, in some cases, bear the responsibilities and perform the duties properly devolving upon them, and the former

are thus necessitated to undertake them. Both are sufferers—the minister, whose mind is secularised, and the people, who are thereby less effectually instructed and edified.

“We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.” This should be the purpose of every minister of Christ, and it should be felt to be the duty of all connected with his ministry to enable him to say so. This is “reason.” Think of the duties to be done, and the dangers to be avoided. The duty is to aim at the conversion of sinners, and to employ all the means that may be effectual to secure so great an end. And the danger is lest the mind may be brought under any influence that may disincline or disqualify it for so high service. These ends are to be gained only by an entire devotion to the duties of the sacred calling. Paul says to Timothy, “Give thyself wholly to them.” The philosophy is as sound as the sentiment is heavenly. The physician who would be successful in his profession must be devoted to it. So must the merchant. So must the man of handicraft. And our plea with every minister of the Word, and every member of the Church, is that the ancient cry shall again be heard from all who bear the vessels of the Lord—“We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.”

“To prayer and the Word.” To prayer in secret, and to the Word in public. Both are necessary. Without prayer, there will be no heart for the Word—no success in it. Without the Word, prayer will be a pretence and a mockery. Together, they are omnipotent through grace. Let all the arrangements of the Church be such as to cherish and encourage their union. Let its temporalities be so ordered, and managed, and cared for by its members, that the ministry may be relieved of them, and that all who sustain it may have it in their power to “give themselves,” without reserve, “continually,” without distraction or interruption, “to prayer,” in earnest, secret pleadings with God, as well as in the public assemblies of the church, and to “the ministry of the Word,” in the proclamation of its doctrines and the enforcement of its duties.

3. That such is the duty of the Church is implied in the manner of appointment to the deacon’s office, which we now proceed to consider.

This is suggested in two expressions. The Apostles said, “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of

honest report, whom we may appoint over this business ;” and then it is added, “The saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose” seven men who are named. By the brethren and the multitude are, of course, to be understood the members of the Church. With them the election lay, and they are required by the exercise of their privilege and the discharge of their duty to place the Church in a condition of efficiency. They had no liberty to neglect to do so.

The argument for the free election of the deacons by the members of the Church, is greatly strengthened by the consideration that all Church-officers were so chosen in the early age of Christianity. In the first chapter of the Acts, we have an account of the election of an Apostle in the room of Judas, and we find it was made by the disciples. Peter addressed them, told them of the duty, urged them to perform it, and they did so. No Apostle, not even the whole company of the Apostles, assumed authority to appoint the ministers of the Word. The call of the people, the voice of the Church, is represented to be essential to the validity of the ministry.

In this arrangement we behold the wisdom that characterised the proceedings of the Apostolic Church. The members of a Church have an interest in the minister whom they have themselves chosen and called, which they can never have in one placed over them without their knowledge, or, it may be, their approval or consent. Besides, they are better qualified to judge of the services that are profitable to them than any other party. They can feel the power of the truth as it is dispensed by one which fails to accompany it in the hands of another. And this sacred consciousness is the best directory in the selection of the Christian ministry.

At the same time there are guards put upon it well fitted to restrain it from abuse. One is the purity of the Church. Its membership must not be a promiscuous community. The men of the world are incompetent to elect a Christian minister. The Church, composed of the godly, can alone do so. If it becomes corrupt, its proceedings must be the same. And they will be all the worse as they tamper with divine things which they are incompetent to direct. This consideration alone is sufficient to account for the unworthy scenes that have sometimes been enacted in the name of Christian rights. Nor is this the only safe-

guard. There is another in the concurrence and sanction of the existing ministry. "Look ye out," said the Apostles, "seven men whom we may appoint over this business." As they were elected by the people, they were appointed by the Apostles. Both had their rights and their duties. Their concurrence was essential. Either might refuse consent. And thus the one was a wholesome restraint upon the other.

What a consummate knowledge of human nature was manifested in the organization of the Christian Church. Truly it might be said of its Author, "He knew what was in man." In the matter of the appointment of its ministry, there is a provision, to meet what might be accounted, conflicting interests, or prejudices, or feelings, which could have proceeded only from Him "in whom dwelt the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

4. But who shall bear the deacon's office? This important question comes now to be considered.

The directions that are given in the text are full and explicit. They are to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom—full of faith and power," ver. 8.

Be it observed, these are the qualifications required for men who should manage the temporal concerns of the Church. It must not be supposed that men of the world can manage them because they are worldly things. They have a sacred bearing. They must be conducted on holy principles, and directed to holy ends. The meanest duties may be elevated by the highest motives. And this is eminently to be sought in all the officers of the Christian Church.

Look at the picture here given of them.

"Men of honest report." Their conduct must be such as to command the respect of all men. The public seldom err in their judgment of men. They may dislike the piety of the godly, and persecute them. But even so, they cannot but secretly and really honour them, if they are consistent. Especially will they do so if they are useful and amiable, and all this they are bound to be.

"Full of the Holy Ghost." Not only should they be men of piety, but eminently so. There should appear in them a purity and a spirituality that would show them to be temples of the Holy Ghost.

"Men of Wisdom." Piety is a first requisite, but it is not the only one. There are men of whose godliness we may be per-

suaded, but in whose wisdom for the direction of human affairs we have not confidence. The deacon needs the wisdom that can direct the affairs of time, as well as the piety that is all important for the concerns of eternity.

“Full of faith.” This will secure both piety and wisdom. The great object is Jesus Christ, elevating the mind to Him as the exalted standard. And its directory is the Word, supplying unerring counsel in all the duties and difficulties of life. The diligent student and careful observer of God’s Word, is sure to be full of both “the Holy Ghost and wisdom.”

And as the result of all this, so will he be of “power” also. An influence will attach to him that is mighty for good. Behold it exemplified in Job, who could say, “Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spoke not again, and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouths wide as for the latter rain.”

It is important to observe how fully the Apostle Paul dwells on the character of the deacon. He says, after having described the minister, “likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.”

It will perhaps be said, after this description, such characters are rare, and if the Church is to be without deacons till such are found, it may wait long. Without inquiring what reason there may be for such remark, we may well ask what are we to say if there be ground for it? Is this the use that has been made of our Christian privileges, that the Church is really not qualified to supply its own necessary officers? If it be so, we have cause for deep humiliation before God. It was not so in the early Church. They chose seven men, such as were required by the emergency. Our fault has been, we have not sought for them, nor employed them as we ought to have done. We have the same Saviour and the same Spirit that raised them up at the first, and they are able and willing to do so still. In truth, the Church has never wanted many such. But their numbers and their qualifications may be both much increased, and if we ask them of the Lord He will bestow them upon us.

5. Their appointment to office, when so provided, will require little to be said for its explanation.

It is thus recorded, "whom they set before the apostles ; and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them." Simple, however, as the statement is, it contains some high principles.

The disciples set the elected deacons before the apostles. The principles of Church government to which we have adverted, were at once acted upon. The members of the Church elected, and the apostles ordained. The one could not act without the other. There was a happy harmony of interests and exercises. And you cannot but recognize in these proceedings our cherished Presbyterian order.

The apostles prayed over the elected and presented deacons. God was acknowledged in all. Without Him it was felt the whole procedure was vain. We must do nothing in the Church on which we may not ask His blessing. And we must expect no benefit from any ordinance or institute but as that blessing is conferred.

Then they "laid their hands on them." This was to be a sign of the bestowment of the Spirit. Yet, observe, that Spirit was sought for men of whom it had been already declared, they "were full of the Holy Ghost." The sign was to be a token of the increase of His gifts and graces, as these were required for the efficient discharge of their new duties. We need His constant influence. Nor are we to set any limits to His abundant blessing. Every duty is to be undertaken with an eye to His promised help, and it is to be performed in dependence on His power and grace. The mere ordinance is in itself nothing, but if owned to be the channel of the Spirit to the soul, it is everything.

6. In the last place, blessed effects resulted from the institution of this office.

"The word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly ; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Many evils had been prevented, but no mention is made of them. The discontent that had arisen was silenced, for the cause was removed. The apostles were not hindered nor distracted in their work by misunderstandings in the Church. It is a blessed thing, and a cause of much thankfulness, when we are enabled

to have such arrangements as hinder the intrusion of hurtful divisions.

Better, however, than the mere prevention of evil, much good was done. O! how much! "The word of God increased." It was preached more generally and more powerfully. A manifest blessing rested on its ministers. "The number of the disciples multiplied greatly." The preached word was made effectual. As its preachers were blessed they became a blessing. When their own hearts were enriched their hearers felt the power of the truth. "And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The most prejudiced were persuaded. The bitterest enemies were won to friendship. And, so far, the strongest barrier against the progress of the gospel was thrown down. It is said, "when a man's ways please the Lord He maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." And so, when the Church is acceptable to God, He causes it to triumph over the enmity of men, and to gain them by love.

In conclusion, there is one lesson deducible from this whole subject, which ought not to be unnoticed. It is the connection between a right ecclesiastical polity and a successful ministration of the word. It is true God does not refuse to bless His own word under whatever polity it is preached. Amid much evil He will bless whatever is good, in proportion to its amount. But that amount is largely dependent on the provisions that are made for it. There may be a polity that hinders, and cramps, and limits the truth. And there may be a polity that preserves it, and gives it a free exercise, and tends to increase it. Such was that adopted at the beginning by the New Testament Church. We may rest assured, the nearer we come to it, the more likely is the ministry of the word to be effectual under it. The Spirit is pleased with His own institutes, and will put honour upon them. He appointed them, because they are best adapted to secure the ends of His grace. Our concern, therefore, is to ascertain what they are, and conform our practice to them. Yet, let us beware we do not trust in them. If we do He will refuse to bless them. We must pray, and wait for Him in them. And it is simply as we obtain Him we gain the ends of all ecclesiastical polity, the increase of "pure and undefiled religion."

The Work of the Spirit in the Proto-Martyr Stephen.

"He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."—ACTS vii. 55.



THE name of Stephen, the proto-martyr, has been from the beginning embalmed in the heart and memory of the Christian Church. He was one of the first seven deacons chosen by the disciples at Jerusalem, and is mentioned with high honour and distinction among them. He acted also as an evangelist, and it is recorded of him, that "full of faith and power, he did great wonders and miracles among the people," and that when opposed by some who heard him, "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." His last discourse is related in the chapter before us. It was heard with attention until he came to its application, but no sooner did he direct its solemn lessons to the conscience and life of his hearers, saying, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye;" than, "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth," and stoning him in their fury, put him to that violent death which honoured him with the crown of the first martyrdom in the Christian Church.

It is deserving of notice, how explicitly the character and attainments, and triumph of Stephen are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In the first notice of him in the Scripture history, he is called "a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost." So, also, the triumphs of his death are prefaced by the announcement, that "he was full of the Holy Ghost," giving us to understand that it is to this source we are to ascribe them.

Bearing this in mind, let us see what they were. Nor can we do better than simply follow the narrative of the text, where it

is recorded, that he "looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw it opened—beheld there the glory of God—saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God—said, Lord Jesus receive my spirit—prayed, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge—and then fell asleep." We shall notice these expressions in their order.

1. He looked up stedfastly into heaven, and said, "Behold I see the heavens opened."

His heart had long been there, and his treasure too, and therefore his eyes naturally turned to the same place. Where, besides, could he look? All around nothing was to be seen but his infuriated murderers, nothing heard but their violent execrations. Every thing urged him to look away from earth, and everything invited him to lift up his heart and eyes to heaven. He had no sympathy below, but he had the sympathy of all above. Heaven was miraculously opened to his view that he might see the hiding-place there provided for him. There were the redeemed who had gone before him in all generations from the beginning of the world. There were the angels who had never left their seats of glory. There was Jesus, who had ascended by a death still more violent and severe than his own. There was God, his heavenly Father, waiting to bid him welcome to his everlasting home. As it had been in Jacob's visions, so was it granted to Stephen now. He saw, by faith, a ladder that reached from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God were ascending and descending, while the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, stood at the top of it, his covenant father and friend. The fury of his persecutors only urged him with the greater speed to pass up by it to the glory in reserve for him. And with the eye of his faith and hope stedfastly directed to the opened heavens, he ascended to the city of his eternal refuge.

As we contemplate this scene, well may we exclaim, "Lord, what is man." That men should hate one another, is a fearful proof of depravity. That they should imbrue their hands in one another's blood is an extreme of iniquity that shocks even the wicked. But that they should devote a man to a violent death because he spoke to them of their own religious and eternal concerns with earnestness and faithfulness, is an enormity to be accounted for only by the powerful influence of him who is said to have been a murderer from the beginning, on the depraved heart of man.

Yet even here see how good is brought out of the evil. It is good to learn what man is, and to see the truth of the divine Word, that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is good to know that man's violence only hastened the blessedness of the martyr, who feared not them who might kill the body, but Him only who could destroy both body and soul in hell for ever. It is good to see that even in an hour of such extremity the promise can be verified, "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be." And it is good to have, in the sufferings and patience of the first martyrs, a proof of the truth of the gospel which they had been led to embrace on the evidence of facts for the certainty of which they were willing to die.

One lesson let all learn from this feature of the scene, that as earth casts out the followers of Jesus, they have only to lift up their eyes and see heaven opened for their reception.

2. While Stephen looked up stedfastly to heaven, "he saw the glory of God."

In the vision of Isaiah, recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, we may see the meaning of the glory revealed to Stephen. He says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim; and one cried to another and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." This vision is explained by John, saying in his gospel, "These things said Isaiah when he saw the glory of Christ, and spake of Him." While the Seraphim looked upon Christ they saw in Him the glory of God. Particularly were they struck by the discovery there made of the holiness of God. No doubt they were astonished by its revelation of the Divine mercy. But this did not arrest their attention so much as its exhibition of the Divine holiness. Rather than sacrifice His justice, when God would save sinners, he gave up His own Son to die, the just for the unjust. At this angels stood amazed, and gave vent to their adorations, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

It was the same glory which Stephen saw as is manifest from the whole scene. He beheld the divine honour secured by that redemption for which he was now called upon to die. This sustained him. What was his momentary suffering compared with the end that it served, recommending to men the glorious

Gospel of the blessed God, as that which harmonised the divine honour with their salvation? As for himself, he was more than satisfied. He might, indeed, have adopted the words afterwards uttered by the Apostle Paul—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." As for others, he wished them to understand that the truth which he had preached was worth dying for. It was none other than "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses." On this they might securely rely. It was in harmony with the divine perfections. It contained a discovery of wisdom into which the angels desired to look. It revealed a manifestation of power fully equal to the great emergency. The Gospel was "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." It afforded an exhibition of love that might justly constrain the acknowledgment, "God is love." And yet it contained abundant evidence that God was just while He justified the sinner. His name was "a just God and a Saviour." All this was discovered to Stephen with a clearness and fulness in which he had never seen it before. For such a dispensation, so fitted to bless mankind, he was willing to die. And then, as for God, he could well cry, as he beheld this sight, in the well-known language of the angels when Christ was born, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

3. More particularly, "he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

This sight is appropriately connected with the others. It suggests that the glory thrown over the divine character was a reflection from the person of Jesus. It was while the perfections of God were seen in the light cast upon them by Him, that they appeared so glorious.

At the same time, this object would powerfully arrest the attention of the dying martyr. While the glory of God dazzled his sight, and filled him with unutterable admiration, he could look upon Jesus standing on the right hand of God with more composure and a more full apprehension of the meaning. There was He who had, a short time before, been cast off and crucified by men as a malefactor unworthy to live. There was He for whose sake he was now subjected to so much suffering and disgrace. He had a visible proof of the truth of the Saviour's

words, uttered when He stood before the bar of His earthly judge—"Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And, O! what must have been Stephen's reflections when he gazed upon this object and understood its design. All the violence of his murderers, and all the agitation and suffering of the scene through which he passed, could not, and did not, hinder the high and holy thoughts that passed through his mind. He was "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man." And must he not have had such meditations as these?

He saw that Christ was accepted of the Father. Men had cried, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." But God had received Him. Then was fulfilled His own prediction of His vindication by the Spirit—"He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go unto my Father." It was as if God said to all men, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

In this acceptance with the Father, he saw the proof that the work committed to Christ on the earth had been accomplished. In the prospect of it He had said, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." On the cross He said, "It is finished." And now the echo was returned from heaven, "It is finished." The salvation of the sinner was completed. "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." We are "complete in Him."

He was seen "standing," to import that He was engaged in intercession. "It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." He "appears in the presence of God for us," to plead by His sacrifice on earth for the extension of its benefits to all who should believe upon Him.

He was seen with the purchase of the Spirit to confer him in His gifts and graces on His people. The same discovery was made to Stephen afterwards granted to John—"I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." He could, therefore, look up to Him thus and cry, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity

captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Sustained by such views, the martyr might well triumph over all his enemies. He saw human nature exalted to its own place again in the glory of heaven in the person of Jesus Christ. He looked upon Him as his own representative, and that of all who should be united to Him in faith. And therefore could he join in the Saviour's triumph as His own, saying, "He hath spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in His cross."

4. In full harmony with these views, we find him next saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

The words are few and simple, yet how much they contain.

Stephen had a clear apprehension of the soul's independence of the body. He could have no doubt of what would befall his body. He was in the hands of his murderers, and he had no power nor desire to resist them. It would speedily be a mangled corpse, torn by the violent missiles hurled recklessly against him. It might be dismembered and disfigured, and disgraced. Be it so. This could not reach the immaterial, immortal, and redeemed spirit. "The body returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it." This was well known to Stephen, and it sustained him.

He knew that even then, so soon as his enemies had despatched him, his soul would be admitted to glory. Jesus was standing to receive it as soon as it was emancipated from the clay tabernacle. As Paul hath said, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have an house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He would not be ignorant of what Christ had said to the dying thief upon the cross, "to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." He was ready to say, as it was afterwards expressed, "I had rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better." He saw there would be no chasm between death and glory. The perpetration of the one would be the commencement of the other.

Stephen could realize, under all his agony, the sufficiency of Christ for his salvation. All that befel him never weakened his faith. He had been prepared for it by the saying of Christ, "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He could, therefore, say under all the

darkness of that trying hour, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." Indeed, he found in his own experience the truth of these words, and he could testify, "Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

Even for the poor mangled body he did not despair. His blood-thirsty assailants might do with it as they pleased for a time. But it should be only for a time. His precious dust would all be gathered one day, and restored to its own place in his glorified body. Of this there was soon a sweet earnest in his honourable burial. It is recorded, "devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." We may be sure the angels watched the scene with no less interest. And still more, Jesus Himself would take care of his servant's dust. His words would be well known to His martyr, "I am the resurrection and the life." And he could let them mangle his poor body in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life, knowing that as it was "sown in corruption it would be raised in incorruption, sown in weakness it would be raised in power, sown a natural body, it would be raised a spiritual body."

What a manual has the example of Stephen furnished to the dying followers of Christ in all ages. His words, more than any others, perhaps, have proved to be their watchword at the gates of death. They are easily remembered, easily expressed, and yet they fill the soul with the most numerous weighty and appropriate thoughts for a dying hour.

May they be ours in faith and hope! "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

5. And how was he exercised towards those who treated him so cruelly and unjustly? This appears in his prayer for them, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Stephen died like his Master. They both used similar expressions toward God and men. Jesus said, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit;" and Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and Stephen imitated Him, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

This prayer appears to have been offered by him in great

composure and solemnity. It is recorded, "he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." That loud voice was uttered after he had assumed the fitting attitude of prayer before the eyes of his assailants. It expressed the deep earnestness that moved him to desire such blessing for them. And it presented a spectacle which might well impress even their hard hearts at the time, and serve for a profitable example in some future day of calm reflection.

What just views of Christ these prayers of Stephen discover. He worshipped Him. He gave up his soul to Him as its creator and preserver. And he asked Him to give the pardon of sin to his murderers. There can be no doubt, therefore, as to Stephen's views of the personal glory of Christ. He regarded Him as the great God and our Saviour.

And O ! what a view does his conduct give us of the nature and power of the religion of Christ. It constrains us to love all men. It inspires with forgiveness and forbearance. It causes us to "do good to them that hate us ;" to "pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us." And it teaches us that in death we must bid farewell to men in the spirit of forgiveness to all, however they may have acted by us in the business of life. It must be so, both as the result of God's dealings by us, and as a meetness for His heavenly kingdom. A sense of God's forgiveness to us inspires us with the same disposition toward others. If He has forgiven us much, well may we forgive them little. And unless this be our spirit we cannot dwell in that holy habitation, where hatred, and envy, and ill-will, can never enter. Let us now cultivate a forgiving spirit, that when we come to die we may be able to join with Stephen, and pray for our enemies, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

6. It was while he expressed such a spirit toward God and man, that it is recorded of him "he fell asleep."

He died. And what a view of death this description of it gives.

It is a calm and peaceful scene. That of Stephen was apparently the reverse. Yet it is declared to have been really so. His enemies were agitated and violent, but he was neither. In the midst of all their fierceness God enabled him in patience to possess his soul. And so shall we do if we have the same spirit.

In sleep, while the body is overcome, and its senses and mem-

bers are bound up, the mind is still conscious. It thinks, and lives, and acts in sleep. So in death. The body is under its dominion, but the soul is free. Death has no power over it.

Out of sleep the body shall awake. It is for refreshment, and not for extinction. It is "tired nature's sweet restorer." And so shall the grave prove to the body of the believer. He can say with his Master, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the place of the dead, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Learn from the example of Stephen how to die in peace. It is when our views and feelings shall be like his we may hope to realise the prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Like him, we must have our minds set stedfastly on heaven until we see it opened. Like him, we must see how salvation harmonises with the glory of God. Like him, we must have right apprehensions of the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. Like him, we must have faith in Jesus in the last extremity. Like him, we must be at peace with all men. And then, but only then, can we hope, like him, to die in peace.

From the case of Stephen, we learn that the Spirit has brought great glory to Christ from the death of His people. No doubt, that is promoted mainly by their life, but not exclusively. Death is a mighty enemy—the king of terrors—and it is a signal trophy to Christ when that foe is overcome. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The spirit is then given in abundant measure. He causes the views to be often more clear than ever before, the faith to be more simple and assured, and the patience, and hope, and all other graces to be in more vigorous exercise. We ought not, therefore, to be in bondage through fear of death. The honour of Christ is concerned in it, as well as our safety. And we ought to await it with confidence, saying, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

Finally, what shall be the glory of the martyr in the kingdom of heaven? This is signified in the high honour conferred on Stephen, whose history is recorded for the admiration of all generations. And it is specially noticed in the Book of Revelation. It was of such John asked, "What are these which are

arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" And the answer is well known—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." May we dwell with them for ever!

VI.

The Work of the Spirit in the Eunuch of Ethiopia.

“ Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus.”—ACTS viii. 35.



THE providence exercised by the Spirit in the affairs of men is a subject of deep and practical interest. He suggests thoughts to our minds, orders circumstances in our life, and overrules events that befall us, so as to accomplish his purposes towards us. Thus, in the example cited in the passage before us, we learn that “The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot;” and again, “The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.” In like manner we are informed in the 16th chapter of this book, at the 7th verse, that when Paul and Silas “were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.” In both these instances it is peculiarly impressive to observe that the design of the Spirit was to lead to the conversion of particular persons, by means of the events which he either furthered or hindered. Thus in the latter case, when the Apostles were restrained from going where they desired, shortly after “a vision appeared to Paul in the night, and there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over and help us.” Thence “they gathered that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia.” They went to Philippi, the chief city of that place, and there the conversion of the jailor and of Lydia was the result. So also, in the example of Philip before us, the purpose of the Spirit is seen to have been the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch. All the circumstances were ordered so as to end in that consummation.

What were these circumstances? It is important to trace them as illustrative of the work of the Spirit. The eunuch was led to go up to Jerusalem to worship; he was furnished with a

copy of the ancient Scriptures ; at the fitting juncture his attention was directed to a special portion of the Divine Word ; he was furnished with an interpreter ; he was enlightened to understand the Word read and expounded ; he made a public profession of Christ in the instituted ordinance ; the interpreter seasonably furnished was withdrawn ; and he was left to go on his way rejoicing. All these circumstances appear in the development of the providence of the Spirit toward the eunuch. They are expressly attributed to His agency. Let us consider them, remembering that the Spirit continues to exercise a similar providence to the present time in the accomplishment of His gracious purposes towards the souls of men.

1. The eunuch was led to go up to Jerusalem to worship.

He was not a Jew, and, therefore, that he should go to such a place for such a purpose is singular. The only intimation we have respecting his original position is at the 27th verse—“ Behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship.” His residence was far distant from the sacred city. His education had, no doubt, been entirely contrary to the truths of Judaism. And his worldly interests would probably be endangered by any departure from the religion of his country and kindred. Yet he went up to the feasts that distinguished the great anniversaries of the Jews, and he went for the purpose of participating in them—this being, no doubt, the time and the occasion of his visit.

How was he led to do so ? It is vain to conjecture. The fact is stated, but the circumstances that led to it are not related. His mind had somehow been seriously impressed in the midst of heathenism. He had heard of the true God and His religion. Some one may have been cast in his way who uttered a word that took hold of his attention, and continued to operate there. Some book may have fallen into his hand that exercised a secret and uncontrollable influence over his mind. Or some trouble may have befallen him that constrained him to go in search of consolation and guidance that could not be found in his own land. One thing is clear, he had been brought under some favourable influence. This is apparent from the character and position assigned to him. He had gained the confidence of his royal mistress, no doubt by his obvious and well-tried fidelity. We

may safely conclude, he had become a proselyte to Judaism, by whatever means that change had been effected. It was as such he went up, probably, to Jerusalem, acting according to the light he had already received, and hoping for farther illumination and edification through the providence and grace that had hitherto attended him.

What an exhibition of the divine sovereignty is presented to us in this case. Here is a man far away from all opportunities of religious knowledge and improvement, yet he obtains enlightenment and religion in the full measure of those who had enjoyed the most advantageous opportunities. Truly God is sovereign, and "giveth not account of any of His matters," doing as He will "in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth."

Let us learn also from the example of the eunuch the duty of acting in accordance with what light and opportunity we do enjoy. Had he not gone up to Jerusalem the incipient principles of religion then appearing in his mind might never have been brought to maturity. Had he yielded to indolence, or worldliness, or shame, or fear, he might have sunk down into the old heathenism in which he had been reared. But he knew that the true religion, the true ordinances, and the true God, were to be found at Jerusalem. Thither therefore he went. He was in the way of duty, and the Lord met him. Let us do the same, and we may find the same. Whatever we know to be the means of improvement, let us observe them, and in due time, and in His own way the Spirit of the Lord will make them effectual for our instruction.

2. The eunuch was furnished with a copy of the sacred Scriptures. This was what he was engaged in reading when Philip met him. Where did he obtain it, or how?

It is possible he may have become acquainted with the Old Testament in his own country, and that from it may have arisen all the religion and knowledge which he possessed. By a train of singular providences the Spirit had caused an extensive circulation of the Scriptures through many countries. About 250 years before the advent of Christ there lived a king in Egypt who was much given to literature. Among other means of promoting it he had employed learned men to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek tongue. That was in those days the

language of the learned world. The task was well executed. It produced the Septuagint, the name given to it from the number of persons engaged in its preparation. Of the book, a copy may have come into the hands of the eunuch. From all that appears respecting him, it is likely his education had been as good as the time and place afforded, and his taste literary. The curiosity that prompted him to become acquainted with the Septuagint, may have led him to the knowledge of the truths which it contained. He was obviously much impressed somehow. If it was by this means, he would naturally desire to go to Jerusalem, where he knew the people dwelt whose sacred books had become so precious to him. He would thus hope to obtain farther knowledge, and have much that was yet dark to him more fully explained.

Or perhaps he had not known the Scriptures until he went to Jerusalem. There it may be he first heard of them. He would hear them read at the public feasts. He would become acquainted with the ministers of religion who possessed and explained them. He would not be satisfied without possessing a copy for himself. And now he was carrying away his treasure to his own land, and he occupied himself in reading the sacred pages as he journeyed by the way. This may have been the history of his possession of the Scriptures.

One thing however is clear, his possession of them, however obtained, formed an era in his history. The Spirit honours his own word. "Thou hast magnified Thy word, said David, above all Thy name." It was in the use of this blessed means the eunuch found such a happy issue. It is a good example to us. The Scriptures are in our hands, and we should use them. We should do so ourselves, and encourage others to do the same. While the eye traces the hallowed page it may please the sovereign Spirit to give its truth saving power over the heart and life.

3. Not merely, however, did the Spirit order that the eunuch should possess the Scriptures and read them, but he led his attention to a peculiar passage contained in them. "He read the Prophet Esaias," and we are even informed, "the place of the Scripture which he read was this, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth." The precious portion that feasted the eyes of

the stranger, was the well-known fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. On this he was intent when Philip met him.

Can we for a moment suppose this was accidental? His taste may have led him to a composition so beautiful. Or what is far more likely, his religious concern may have caused him to linger upon it, as well adapted to his earnest and anxious state of mind. Or it may have been recommended to his special attention by some devout Jew whose acquaintance he had made at the feast. Or he may have heard it read there, and been so impressed by its beauty and pathos, that he recurred to it in his solitary journey, to beguile the way, and further his instruction. But by whatever circumstance he was led to the passage, we cannot help believing, in all the circumstances of the case, that he was led to it by the special providence of the Holy Spirit. It was the very passage fitted to the occasion. It was precisely what was needed to form the groundwork of the conversation that should take place between him and Philip, in order to lead to his full perception of the truth, and his establishment in it.

This is often the way of the Spirit. How many are there who can testify that their attention has been called to some particular passage or text in a way as remarkable as was that of the eunuch. The eye has fallen upon it in the word, or it has been uttered in conversation by a friend, or the minister has made it the subject of discourse. The history of "poor Joseph" has been the same as that of many more. He entered the church of Dr. Calamy, just as he read the text, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." He had never heard it before, and he never forgot it afterwards. It proved to be the incorruptible seed of the word in his soul. With the word of truth the Spirit begat this poor humble man a child of God and an heir of glory. That Scripture abode with him and guided him while he lived, and comforted him when he died. Nor was such a dealing peculiar to him. All who have been observant of the dealings of the Spirit, have found the same in themselves and others.

Let us learn to be observant of such dealings. When our minds are specially impressed by any portion of the divine word, we should take note of the event. It may be the pleasure of the Spirit to make it the instrument of conversion or edifica-

tion. We should mark His design and wait for it. It may be with us as it was with the eunuch, and prove to be "profitable for doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction in righteousness."

4. At this stage of the eunuch's history, the Spirit furnished him with an interpreter. "The Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot." It is not necessary to suppose that any audible voice was uttered or heard. An impression was made on Philip's mind, from something which had occurred, that he ought to do so. He saw and heard the stranger reading aloud, and perceived it was the prophecy of Isaiah that engaged him. This was his introduction, and he obeyed the impulse that came upon his mind to open a conversation.

He inquired, "understandest thou what thou readest." And the Spirit who employed him gave his question a favourable reception. A haughty self-sufficient man might have been offended by such conduct in an entire stranger. But there was something in the manner of it that engaged the confidence of the eunuch. This is plain from his reply, "how can I except some man should guide me?" And still more from his conduct, "he desired Philip that he should come up and sit with him."

What a sight was here! A Jew and an Ethiopian sitting together in the same chariot, the prophecy of Isaiah open before them, and an earnest conference on the 53d chapter. How angels must have looked upon it. Here was a man thirsting for divine knowledge, and beside him sat another most competent to impart it. The interests of a great and distinguished man's soul were in the balance. And not his only. Probably he had a family, and we know he held a high place in the state. What then might be his influence if he returned to both, an enlightened and converted man? Philip would feel deeply his responsibility. He was one of the seven who had been chosen with Stephen for a deacon. They were men of a kindred spirit. They had been selected as "men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." And there is abundant evidence that he acquitted himself on this occasion in a way worthy of his character and mission.

It is the Lord's will that the preached word should be a principal instrument in the salvation of souls. "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preach-

ing of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in comfort and holiness through faith unto salvation." Many times a single remark sheds light upon a passage that has hitherto been veiled in obscurity. Or how often have difficulties been solved in a brief conversation that have long been felt to be insurmountable? "The goings of God have been seen in the sanctuary" from the beginning. "I went into the house of God, and then I understood it," has been the experience of not a few beside David. We should count it a high privilege to enjoy such a blessing, and "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together." And when we do assemble it ought to be in the spirit of the Psalmist, when he said—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple."

5. It was not in vain Philip preached to the Eunuch, for as they conferred together he became the subject of enlightening, converting, and sanctifying grace.

It is doubtful whether he had previously been a child of God. He was clearly under the leadings of His providence, but there is not evidence that he was the subject of His grace. He laboured under an amount of ignorance that seems incompatible with a renewed heart. He asked, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or some other man?" He felt the need of salvation, but it does not appear that he had found the Saviour.

But the Spirit, who had undertaken his case, led him into the truth. He gave him an humble and teachable spirit. He produced in him "a readiness of mind" to receive the Word. At this crisis, "Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus." He would show him the accordance between the predictions of Isaiah, and the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. He would unfold to him the fulness and freeness of salvation by Him. He would tell him of the confirmation of all this by the resurrection and ascension of the Saviour. And He would urge upon him that "now was the accepted time, now the day of salvation." His word was with power. Through it light broke in upon the mind of the eunuch, and divine love was shed abroad in his heart. From that hour he became "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

We are warned by this case not to rest in good desires or earnest feelings. We may be under serious impressions, and yet not come to the knowledge of the truth so as to be saved. Let us pray, and not rest until we are saved and answered. "Create, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

6. There is abundant evidence that it was so with the eunuch. He made a public profession of Christ by observing the ordinance of baptism.

"As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised?" The desire arose in his own mind, and he first made the proposal. He may have learned somewhat of the ordinance on his recent visit to Jerusalem, or perhaps he may have seen it administered to some of the converts; or Philip may have explained to him the duty of a public profession of Christ, and the way of making that profession by baptism.

Still there was no haste nor urgency on the part of the Evangelist. He replied to the wish of the candidate for baptism, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He desired him to understand the mere ordinance would not save him. He must be saved before he observed it. A difficulty was raised rather than removed. Faith was essential to a right participation in the ordinance.

His answer is brief, but satisfactory. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This is the whole gospel. "Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." To do so intelligently and heartily, is to receive the Saviour in the glory of His person as the Son of God, and in His gracious offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. This the eunuch did. That was proved by his baptism. He was well aware to what it would expose him. The news would soon spread. He would publish it himself. It would disgrace him in the eyes of his nation. Perhaps it would deprive him of Royal favour and office. It might bring upon him fierce persecution. It is certain we do not read any more of him, as, if he continued in his exalted station, might have been expected. No matter. He had counted the cost. He was content. So was Philip. "Therefore they went down into the water, and he baptised him."

"With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If we really

receive Christ, we must publicly confess Him. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father and the angels."

7. The mission of Philip was now accomplished, and so "the Spirit of the Lord caught him away."

Perhaps it was done miraculously, and, if so, this would help to confirm the faith of the eunuch. Perhaps it was merely by such an impulse on his mind as had at first induced him to approach the chariot. He felt that his work was now done, and he withdrew.

His removal may have been as seasonable as his access. The convert was left to himself, and he must think and act for himself. The effort would do him good. It would stimulate his prayers and rouse his energies. The want of Philip would lead to edification, as his presence had done already.

We must learn to be independent of the help of others. It is a feeble Christianity that cannot stand by itself. We should remember the divine counsel—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

8. So did the eunuch. "He went on his way rejoicing." He had good cause to do so.

He had exchanged darkness for light, death for life, and the power of Satan for the kingdom of God. Ignorant of the truth, light had broken into his mind, and he saw the way of salvation. Oppressed by the burden of sin, he had been delivered from its load, and made alive unto God. A slave of Satan, he was now the freeman of the Lord. The greatest change had passed over him of which the human mind is capable, and he rejoiced in the consciousness of it.

He was sensible that he now possessed a treasure which would never fail, and of which he could never be deprived. Christ was his portion. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth it." He could say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

And all this was but an earnest. His blessedness had only begun. What was commenced in time would be consummated in eternity. He might say—"Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Well, therefore, might he "go upon his way rejoicing."

There is much instruction in this case of the eunuch which we should be careful to appropriate.

Let us learn to be submissive to those arrangements of providence to which we are subjected. They are the counsels of the Spirit. Our way is ordered of the Lord. It is not "a chance that has happened unto us."

Let us learn to observe the providences in which we are placed. They have a voice and we should hear it. Our inquiry should be that of Paul, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

Let us remember the grand design of all providences. It is to conduct us to the knowledge of Christ and the possession of salvation by Him. Particularly, when God in His providence supplies us with His word and ordinances and ministers, we should hear them uttering one voice, "behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." They are savingly useful only as they guide to Him. Let us see to it that we so know Christ as to rejoice. There is every thing in Him to inspire with joy—His person so glorious—His work so divine—His offices so gracious—His promises so "exceeding great and precious." The command is, "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice."

Let us seek the Spirit in all providences and privileges. He alone can bless them. He alone can enable us to find Christ in them. His office is explained by Christ Himself, saying, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and show it unto you."

VII.

The work of the Spirit in Saul of Tarsus.

"Jesus—hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts ix. 17.



HE life of Jesus Christ, contained in the gospels, is an unanswerable argument for the divine origin and character of the Christian religion. Man could not have conceived it. Its existence is a proof of its divinity. It carries with it its own self-evidencing light. God alone could have revealed it.

In the same way the character of the Apostle Paul furnishes a proof of the truth of the gospel. It can be explained only on the principle laid down in the text, that he was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Considering what he was once, and what he subsequently became, the change can be accounted for only by admitting that the gospel which he preached is true. It can be ascribed only to sovereign grace, almighty power, infinite mercy, and unerring wisdom. The conversion of such a man as Paul, must have originated, not in himself nor in man, but in the sovereignty of God. The change that passed over him must have been accomplished by power such as He who made man can alone exercise. What mercy short of that which has been revealed in Jesus Christ would have regarded such a sinner? And yet in the selection of Him as an instrument for the propagation of the gospel the divine wisdom is conspicuous. In the character of Paul we behold at once an illustration and a confirmation of the religion which he taught.

Let us therefore contemplate his character, as a man "filled with the Holy Ghost"—noticing his previous condition, his conversion, his life, ministry, writings, and death. The subject is

large, and would demand a volume to treat it with justice. In a single discourse it can only be glanced at.

1. His previous condition. It is most humbling but instructive to contemplate it.

The first notice we have of him is in the account of the martyrdom of Stephen. It is there said, "the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul." There can be little doubt this was he of whom we now treat. Acts xxii. 20. He was present at the death of the proto-martyr and took a part in it. He seems to have directed it. As he took charge of the clothes of the murderers while they were engaged in their bloody work, it is possible they were employed and commanded and stimulated by him. What an idea this gives us of the condition of his mind? He must have been fearfully hardened. He needed an amount of bitterness beyond that of the men that were actively engaged in hurling their murderous weapons at their victim. The cool satisfaction of the quiet onlooker was worse than the furious onset of the perpetrators of the foul deed. This excess of cruelty too appeared in a young man. It would not have seemed so misplaced in one who had been hardened by a long course of iniquity. But in a young man, where some measure of tenderness or generosity might have been expected, it was evidence of a most depraved condition. The scene is relieved by only one circumstance. Stephen poured out his dying breath in earnest prayer for his murderers. That prayer could not be in vain. The answer lighted on the head of that wicked young man. He was subdued by the grace that sustained the martyr. And his conversion is one of the many examples that exist of the efficacy of believing prayer.

There is another notice of Paul's state of mind before his conversion that gives us an impression not less vivid of his exceeding wickedness. As he went to Damascus, in his capacity of a persecutor, the description is, "he was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." His very soul was on fire with unholy passion, and his breath was a stream of the most infuriated malevolence. His own recollections of the spirit which then animated him are the most bitter. Even after he had been forgiven he could never forget it. And while he lived he abased himself on account of it. The terms which he

applies to himself are "a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious."

It was also an aggravation of his iniquity that he was mentally no ordinary man, and had enjoyed many distinguished advantages in the highest education which the age afforded. God had endowed him with large capacities of intellect, and they had been trained to the utmost height of advancement. He remembered this when he said he had "been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel." The very morality of his life, too, instead of being an alleviation, was an aggravation of his criminality. He should have known and done better. There was no excuse for a man who felt the claims which others had upon him. It was not mere recklessness that drove him forward. What he did was with full design and purpose. He understood it well. And the same must be said of the sincerity with which he devoted himself to his cursed work. His whole heart was in it. So blinded and hardened was he that he "thought he did God service." He was as sincere in seeking the ruin of his fellow-creature as was Satan himself when he sought and secured the overthrow of our race. This was the very culminating point of his depravity. It had attained to an indescribable amount of inveteracy.

Such was the original character of Paul. And it prepares us to consider—

2. His conversion. The narrative of it is contained in the chapter before us; and is given with a minuteness in accordance with its importance.

The time at which it took place is worthy of notice. "He went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." He urged the high priest, who was not fierce enough for him against the Christians, to satisfy his hatred. He desired to be employed in inflicting injury upon them. And he gloated over the prospect with delight of seizing, and dragging, and committing to prison unoffending fellow-creatures, without respect to age, or sex, or condition. It was thus at the very moment, when the storm of unhallowed passion was at its height in his soul, that God manifested His purpose of mercy toward him. O, what an exemplification of the principle which he afterwards so strongly inculcated—"where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ;

that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

It was through Jesus Christ. This was the manner of it. "As he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When he asked, "who art thou, Lord?" he was answered, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What a discovery! This was He whose followers he was pursuing with such ferocity. In pursuing them, he was persecuting Him. Why did he do so? This was the question he was required to answer. Why? He was confounded. He had a glimpse of the glory of Jesus. He saw Him in the highest heavens. The light that emanated from Him was only an emblem of His purity. He saw that the being whom he had regarded as an impostor was accepted by the righteous judge of all, and his soul sunk within him.

Of the exercises of his mind we have no distinct intimation beyond what is contained in the few expressions attributed to him—"and he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Trembling! So well he might. What had he been doing? How was he at that very time engaged? He felt himself standing before his judge, the Lord of all. Astonished! No wonder. At himself, who had been so infatuated. At the Saviour, who was so glorious. "What wilt thou have me to do?" The stubborn will was broken. He was compelled to submit to the high authority which he had presumed to despise. He learned to call Jesus master. And he saw that his only safety was to learn and do His will.

There is a fearful emphasis in the brief notice, "he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." What he must have suffered during those three days! The blindness of the body was a small affliction compared with the agony of his mind. What self-accusation must have agitated that master mind! In proportion to the might of his natural powers would be the terror that now shook them. He was left for three days in this condition by the wise and merciful purpose of his divine teacher. He must learn by experience what the conviction of sin is. It was such in him that he could neither eat nor drink

during all that time. It was not until he was thus thoroughly abased that means were taken for his relief. In due time, however, these were furnished. The same Lord who had appeared to Paul, spoke also to Ananias, and sent him to him. He pointed him out by the notable expression, "behold he prayeth." He was crying for mercy. And while so engaged, an answer was vouchsafed. Ananias found him out, and accosted him in terms of tenderness that must have come with singular power on his troubled mind. "Brother Saul." He had never heard such accents before. Human sympathy would be comforting. But the message—"The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me." I am His messenger. Of what? "That thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." That thou mightest have at once the light of the body and of the soul. This was enough. It was all he wanted. He was comforted. "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened." Paul was a new man. He was converted. He had passed from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the kingdom of Satan unto God. He was conscious of the change, and rejoiced in Christ.

3. Let us therefore now consider his subsequent life.

It was worthy of his conversion. His change was radical, and the effects corresponded to it. They were numerous and striking, and can only be mentioned.

At once he discovered the utmost decision. "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." He says himself, "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." His whole soul was cast into his work. He had found a new, and blessed, and glorious master; and he would serve Him with his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

In his whole conduct he therefore displayed a noble independence of mind. "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me." He respected them for their character and office. But from the first he would call no man on earth master. He had been taught by Christ, and called to the ministry by Christ, and he needed not any commission nor sanction from men. His favourite title was, "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ."

This led him to exhibit the most determined courage. Of him truly it might be said he feared not the face of man. He did not hesitate to speak his mind to the most exalted in station and character. Even the Apostle Peter fell under his rebuke, when he had justly incurred censure. "I withstood him to the face," says he, "because he was to be blamed." Yet no man was more *respectful* than he. His appearances before his judges were truly noble. Neither Festus, nor Felix, nor Agrippa ever found fault with his conduct when he stood before them. He overpowered them by his eloquence. Yet he constrained them to honour him. He could address himself to "the most noble Festus," and pay a just tribute to Agrippa, "believest thou the Scriptures? I know that thou believest," and yet cause Felix to tremble while he "reasoned of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come."

His *zeal* knew no bounds. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause ; for the love of Christ constraineth us." That was his master principle. It filled his soul and stimulated all his powers. He felt the force of his own principle, and exemplified it in his whole conduct. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are God's."

Hence his *labours* were incredible. He was constrained to say in self-defence, but he could say with truth, "I laboured more abundantly than they all." No difficulties hindered him. They only roused him to greater exertion. He never once fell below the occasion. There was ever found that within him that made him equal to whatever demands were made upon him.

Yet he was truly *humble*. When forced to say, "I laboured more abundantly than they all," he added, "yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." He could not be insensible to the high endowments which God had conferred upon him, but he thankfully owned, by the grace of God I am what I am." Indeed, he entertained the most abasing views of himself. He said, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He exclaimed, in self-condemnation and loathing, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And he never ceased to write bitter things against himself, in remembrance of his early life. "I am the least of the

Apostles, and am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

He was therefore *submissive* under all his trials. He understood well the retributive justice of God. As he had injured others, he did not wonder nor complain if he was injured. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound. Everywhere, and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

To all this, it need only be added his *holiness* was ever undoubted. It is worthy of remark he does not seem to have fallen into any sin that dishonoured his profession. He was consistent throughout. There are sins recorded against Abraham and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Peter, but none against Paul.

Such was the man who had been an inveterate persecutor. He says himself that when the Galatians contemplated the change that had passed over him, "they glorified God in me." On no other ground could his character be explained. He was what he was, and did what he did, because he was "filled with the Holy Ghost."

It is time, however, to look at him in another aspect.

4. Let us now, therefore, consider his ministry.

It may be described in a word as the counterpart of his own experience. As it has been remarked of Luther, that he was first himself the subject of that reformation which he was the means of promoting so extensively among others, far more may it be said of Paul, that his own conversion was the model which he ever held up in his ministry to others.

A summary of his ministerial proceedings may be seen in the second chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, most explanatory and instructive. And a brief notice of it must suffice at present, ver. 1—5.

"I came not," he says, "with excellency of speech or of wisdom." He would not imitate the schools of the day. He was more than a match for them all, but he despised them. He had a message to bear to men, and his aim was to convey it in the plainest and simplest language. His subject neither needed nor admitted the adornment of human art.

That subject he pronounces to be "the testimony of God." He

knew nothing, and professed to teach nothing but as God taught him. He waited for a divine revelation before he opened his mouth to men. Whatever God declared to him he taught, whether men would hear or forbear. And no matter what they might desire, he had no communication to make beyond what was thus made known to them. He held by the one principle, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." His subject was, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Yet there was one special topic in connection with which every other was presented. He says of it, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." If he spoke of sin, or the soul, or salvation, or God, or time, or eternity, or heaven, or hell, all were explained by the light of the cross. There he exhibited the evil of sin, the value of the soul, the completeness of salvation, the character of God, the brevity of time, the endurance of eternity, the agony of hell, and the glory of heaven. All subjects were so treated as to shut up the sinner to the Saviour.

This subject he discussed in a spirit of the utmost lowliness, and under a deep sense of responsibility. "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Truly he "trembled at the word of God." And he dreaded lest in any way he should misrepresent it or miss its great object.

His whole dependence, therefore, was upon the Holy Spirit. He spake from Him and by Him, and looked to Him to render what He said effectual. If that power did not attend His word, all was vain. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

And when the Spirit accompanied the word then was his object gained. "Their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." They would become the subjects of the same grace which he had himself experienced. They would pass through the same change which he had undergone. And he would gain the end of his earnest longing which he expressed when he said—"My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they may be saved,"—"Of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

What a ministry! No wonder a divine power attended it. It is a model to the ministry of every age in its manner, and sub-

ject, and spirit, and power, and object. May the Lord raise up many labourers in the spirit and power of Paul.

5. We can only name his writings. These have perpetuated his ministry to all generations, and extended it to all people. They are indeed an invaluable treasure, as the briefest summary of them will show.

In his Epistle to the Romans he expounds the way of salvation so that none may misapprehend it. The sinner is shown to be perishing, but in Christ there is a full and free salvation.

There are two Epistles to the Corinthians, elucidating the great principles of church government. The ministry and the church and divine ordinances are presented in their true light and efficacy.

To the Galatians he unfolds the doctrine of justification by faith. It is defended, illustrated, and confirmed, so that nothing needs to be added.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is an abridgment of that to the Romans. It lays the foundation in the doctrines of grace, and raises upon these the superstructure of holiness in those who cordially embrace them.

Those to the Philippians and Colossians are experimental and practical. The deepest truths are developed as these affect the heart, and influence the life of those who receive them.

The two to the Thessalonians introduce prominently the second coming of Christ. Once He came to save. Again He will come to judge.

The Epistles to Timothy and Titus have for their subject the gospel ministry. They are full of warnings and counsels well worthy of so great a theme.

That to Philemon has long been considered the most perfect example of letter-writing known among men. It is distinguished by simplicity, tenderness, and power, which have never been equalled.

His last is that to the Hebrews. It contains an exposition of the meaning and design of the Mosaic law. And its motto might well be, "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

These writings are still preserved to the Church. They have proved to be a fountain of wisdom and knowledge to the human family. By them the apostle "being dead yet speaketh." Gene-

ration after generation walk in his light and call "his memory blessed."

6. As he lived he died. We have indeed no record of his death, but we behold him often in the anticipation of it, and know how he was exercised by it. When his friends were alarmed by the dangers that threatened him, and entreated him to avoid them, he said—"What mean ye to weep and break mine heart, for I am ready not only to suffer, but to die, at Jerusalem, for the name of Jesus." At another time when he testified, "the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me," he coolly declared, "but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." His habitual frame of mind in the prospect of death is thus expressed to Timothy—"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." And at a time when he was a prisoner and daily expected to be crowned with martyrdom, he nobly wrote—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing." The religion which he had taught to others sustained himself. He lived in it holy and useful, and he died in it happy and triumphant. On his tomb might well be inscribed the epitaph from his own writings—"To me to live is Christ, to die is gain"—"living or dying we are the Lord's."

In the character of Paul what an evidence we have of what God can do. He had only to speak the word, and this exhibition of divine grace stood before men. He can do so again. O! how soon could God raise up fitting instruments for the world's conversion. Let us ask Him to do so, pleading Christ's own command—"Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

In Paul we see also what one man may do. He has exerted an influence over the whole human family. By his own history, and ministry, and writings, he has left behind him an imperishable record. And as men of all ages read it, they are made


wiser and better. Let us remember Paul ascribed all to grace, and we may be partakers of the same. "These things are written that we through faith and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope."

With such an example before us as the life of Paul, how great is our responsibility. It is designed for our instruction and imitation. We need the conversion he underwent, and should lead his life that we may die his death. All this we may have, and we ought to be able to say—"We are saved by grace."

VIII.

The Work of the Spirit in the Extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

"On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."—Acts x. 45.

T has been customary to contrast Judaism and Christianity, by saying that the former was designed only for a particular nation, while the latter was intended for the whole world. There is a sense in which this contrast is correct, but there is danger of misapprehending it. It is not to be understood that Judaism made no provision for the salvation of all men, or that it was incapable of conveying this high blessing to all. It contained that truth, the remission of sins by the shedding of blood, by the faith of which any sinner might be saved. All, too, were welcome to come and embrace all the privileges, and enjoy all the benefits which it was capable of conferring. None were forbidden. Any Gentile who would, might become a proselyte to Judaism. On the other hand, however, it is true that no injunction was laid on the people of Israel to extend their religion to other nations. It was the will of God to make them the depository of the truth for a time, that it might not perish in the earth. As a parent may cultivate religion exclusively in his own family among a degenerate people, so God was pleased to do under Judaism. Christ Himself said, "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," although He did at the same time receive the woman of Canaan, to whom He said so, and granted her all her desire. He also commanded His apostles, saying, "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It is not for us to inquire into all the reasons of the divine procedure in this

matter. God is sovereign, and men must know it. No doubt, too, this very restriction was beneficial for the world itself in the end. By means of it true religion was preserved, although it was not diffused. But the time was come when there should be a change. It was the will of God that Christianity should begin with the proclamation of its gracious tidings to the whole world. It was made the imperative duty of all who knew it to make it known. This is the subject now to be considered. And in doing so we shall notice, 1. The manner in which this intimation of the divine will was made known to the church, and 2, The thoughts which are suggested by such a dispensation. O ! that we may be enabled to catch its spirit and act upon its requirements.

I. How was the mind of God conveyed to the Church ?

It was by a vision, or a series of visions recorded in the 10th and 11th chapters of this book. Great importance is manifestly attached to the subject by the Spirit, since so large a portion of the divine word is devoted to it. The interests of the whole world are deeply involved in it, and it is treated with corresponding attention.

In looking at the narrative, we find that God prepared the parties in His providence who were necessary for the accomplishment of His purpose. He did so among both the Gentiles and the Jews, and in due time these were brought together, and so directed that no obscurity was left on the divine will. It is both interesting and instructive to trace these particulars.

The first person brought under notice is Cornelius. "He was a centurion," and is described as a "devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." How refreshing to read such an account of one who had been a heathen. His residence as a soldier was in Judea, having been sent there probably from Rome. There he had become acquainted with the Scriptures and the ordinances observed by the Jews. It is likely he was a proselyte, like the eunuch, and he knew and served the true God. To him the Lord appeared in a vision, and commanded him to send men to Joppa, for Peter, who dwelt there, saying, "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." It was clear here was one party fully prepared to hear what was the will of God, and to acquiesce in

it. The Lord knows how to prepare the instruments for His own work.

The messengers were despatched, and as they went another character is brought under our notice. This is the Apostle Peter. As he was engaged in prayer a vision was given to him also. Most remarkable it was. "He saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, rise Peter, kill and eat." This command greatly offended his Jewish prejudice, and he ventured to reply, "not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." He was soon, however, corrected. "The voice spoke unto him again the second time, what God hath cleansed that call not thou common." To confirm the lesson, "this was done thrice, and the vessel was received up again into heaven." What an impression must have been made by all this on the mind of Peter. It was well fitted to prepare him for some extraordinary revelation, and make him willing to obey it.

He was not long left in doubt. We are informed, "while he doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean," the messengers arrived from Cornelius, and an intimation was made to him by the Spirit, that he should go "with them." On the morrow he did so, and thus his mind was gradually prepared for the duty which he should be called on to perform.

What an interview we would expect between these two parties. The record is full of the deepest interest. They explained severally what had happened to them. At length Peter was led to exclaim, "of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." No doubt remained upon his mind respecting the meaning of the vision, and what it was the will of God he should do. At once, therefore, he proceeded to preach the gospel to Cornelius and his friends. As he had done before on the day of Pentecost, he proclaimed the history of Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection. And he concluded with the glorious truth, "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the remission of sins."

Abundant confirmation was speedily given that Peter had rightly interpreted the vision, and done well in preaching the gospel to these Gentiles, however contrary to previous usage. "While Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." We do not wonder at the impression thus made on Peter and his Jewish companions. "They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, which came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Again Peter was constrained to speak and said, "can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" He acted on his conviction, "and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

There is something peculiar in the appointment of Peter to be the man who should first publicly preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He was the apostle of the circumcision—the Jews, while Paul was that of the Gentiles. Not only was he thus officially connected with his own people, but we know that his mind was under very strong prejudices on the subject. This appears in his future history. Paul gives us a disclosure in his Epistle to the Galatians, not at all creditable to Peter, considering what had previously happened to him, and how faithfully he had acted under the circumstances. When the Jewish converts were absent, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were present he declined to do so. Paul says he "dissembled." He boldly charged him with it. "I withstood him to the face," he says, "because he was to be blamed." It was unworthy conduct. It savoured of time-serving. And it shows how strong was the hold which his old prejudices still had upon his mind. Now this was the man whom God had chosen to be the first to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. And it is well fitted to recommend to us the divine wisdom. It shows how clear must have been the evidence, when it satisfied even his mind. Had it been possible to have resisted it Peter was the very man to do it. But he did not because he could not. His conviction too would go far to reconcile others to the change. He had the confidence of his countrymen to a large extent. It is plain he was far more a favourite with them than Paul, and the reason was that he yielded far more to their prejudices. If then he was satis-

fied they might well be so. And the fact that Peter was the man who introduced the change, went far to recommend it to all the nation.

At the same time it is due to Peter to state that he acted with great fidelity and boldness in this emergency. We learn "when he was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." The question was not to be carried without opposition and difficulty. Peter "rehearsed the matter to them from the beginning." He argued with them upon the facts that had occurred, and also on the promise of Christ that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost. That promise, he remarked, had been fulfilled to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. He therefore asked with great force and propriety, "what was I that I could withstand God?" His words were irresistible. The historian tells the result in these words, "when they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Thus was the faith of the church settled on this great vital question. From that day to the present it has remained as it was then determined. All who receive the gospel believe it to be a religion for the world. On this question there is no diversity of opinion. This we owe to the clear and satisfactory manner in which God was pleased at the first to make known His will, and which we have now sufficiently explained.

Blessed fact! It is the will of God that the gospel should be preached to all nations, and that all mankind should be possessors of its privileges and benefits. Let us therefore now—

II. Consider the thoughts that are naturally suggested by such a dispensation.

It may well be assumed that, introduced as it was, it was designed to convey important instruction. The fact is suggestive of many lessons, and we shall endeavour to learn what these are.

1. Is it not clearly indicative of the humbling truth that all men need the gospel of Christ?

It is even so. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The views which the Scriptures give of the universal

depravity of the human race, are deeply affecting. They are found in reference to all people and all times. In the earliest age we are informed, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," that "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Under another economy and at a later period, among the most favoured and advanced people, the doctrine was laid down plainly and broadly, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"—the heart as it is found in man universally. And in the age of the Apostles one of them quotes from the ancient Scriptures, as alike applicable in his time, the humbling testimony, "it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." All are guilty, "by nature children of wrath." All are depraved, "dead in trespasses and sins." Men are perishing in their own corruption. "The wages of sin is death." If there be not a remedy the fearful consequence must ensue to all, "for there is no difference." This is assumed in the publication of the gospel.

2. Blessed be God, however, as it is needed by all, so it is suited to all. In this respect it differs from every other dispensation. Judaism, though divine, was not suited for all people. All who might be willing to embrace it could not, for example, go up to the feasts at Jerusalem, as was required by the law. But no barrier of this kind exists in Christianity. Its ordinances are few and simple, and can be observed by all people, under all circumstances. Its doctrines meet the sinful condition of all men; finding them all guilty, and offering pardon; finding all depraved, and offering purity; finding all weak, and offering strength; finding all ignorant, and proposing to make them "wise unto salvation." There is no hindrance in age, or sex, or condition. It teaches the young man how to cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto, according to the word. It promises the old that they shall be carried even to old age. It exalts woman to her proper place as the friend and companion of man. And it secures to man all his privileges as the lord of the creation. It instructs the rich not to trust in uncertain riches; and one of its characteristics is, that "to the poor the gospel is preached." In Greece

and in Rome there was one doctrine for the learned, and another for the ignorant. Christianity is alike adapted to both. Its lessons are as suitable for health as for sickness. It is alike fitted to teach us how we are to live and to die. It is a religion for time and eternity. It is founded upon human nature. Its author knew "what was in man." And it may be carried and preached to all people as a remedy divinely suited to their necessities. "In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free, but all are one in Him."

3. The gospel was from the beginning designed for all. Its feature of universality appears in the very first announcements of the preliminary dispensations. In the promise to our first parents it was foretold, "the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent"—the Saviour extending His redemption as far as sin was found to prevail. Even the father of the Jews, Abraham, was told, "in him, and in his seed, all the families of the earth should be blessed." The prophets all foretold the universal triumphs of His kingdom. When He appeared, He was hailed as the Saviour of the world. Simeon, for example, clasped Him in his arms, and exclaimed, "now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation—a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." In the epistles the subject is argued habitually on the basis of the ancient Scriptures; and it is shown that they contemplated the universal propagation of the gospel in the latter day. Paul says to the Romans, "now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud Him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse; and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust." It is very interesting to find this accumulated quotation from the Old Testament in proof of the ever-designed publication of the Gospel to all. Yet, in comparison with the clearness of the apostolic testimony, even that is declared to be dark. It certainly was not so in itself, but the prejudices of the Jews made it so. Hence Paul, who spoke as we have heard to the

Romans, says to the Ephesians, "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward; how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." There is something most instructive in this remark of the Apostle. It shows how slow men are to receive the plainest truth, and especially how indisposed to recognise the blessed announcement that "God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."

4. God has, therefore, now commanded that the Gospel shall be preached to all men. Not only may all come and receive it, but it must be carried to them. It is obligatory on those who know it to make it known. The evidence of this duty is explicit.

Before our Lord's ascension to glory, His last words were, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." With the whole weight of His mediatorial authority, this command is laid upon His Church, and He silences every objection that could be made to obey it, by the promise of His own presence and blessing.

It was so understood by the early Church. They considered that their mission was to seek the conversion of the world. They met, and conferred, and took their measures for this purpose. They regarded themselves as a great missionary institute for the evangelisation of the earth. It was on this assumption they acted. "They went everywhere preaching the Word." Wherever men were to be found, there they considered they were authorised and bound to go. And they did go. "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." Paul compares the progress of the Gospel in his day to that of the sun's course in the heavens. O! had the Church continued so to act, how blessed would the world be now. It would be full of truth, righteousness, and prosperity. Every man would long since have been sitting under his own vine and fig-tree in peace and plenty.

5. So shall it one day be.

The promises are sure. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "All nations shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed." "I saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." And it shall not be so done in vain, for the consummation is announced in the triumphant issue, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

Of the approach of this blessed day, there are now many indications.

The personal responsibility of extending the Gospel is felt as it never was before. No one who has felt the power of the truth can be any longer blind to the duty of doing what he can to propagate it. Whatever this may be—whether by his word, or his contributions, or his prayers—he knows that he dare not neglect it. Having freely received, he feels bound freely to give. The light cast upon this duty has been such that we are justified to question the personal Christianity of any who do not feel the obligation of extending it.

The Church of our day has largely partaken of this spirit. It has become missionary to a degree which it never attained before. Every church holding the head Christ Jesus is bearing a part in this work. Any that does not is regarded as having placed itself beyond the pale of Christianity. This is a hopeful symptom, and full of promise to both the Church and the world.

God, in His providence, is remarkably opening the way. The inventions of science and the enterprise of commerce are making a highway for the Gospel through the earth. "The field is the world," and everywhere it is coming to be of easier access. The nations are approximating more and more to the idea of one great family, whose interests are common and mutual. The present disastrous war is only a momentary interruption, and will teach the lesson more effectually. All things are hastening to one end, and that is the realisation of the prophet's vision, which, be it observed, connects the final triumphs of the Gospel with the judgments of war. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse: and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True;

and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns ; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but He himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations : and He shall rule them with a rod of iron : and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

With two observations this subject may be concluded.

1. Let us see that we receive the Gospel ourselves. It will be of small moment to us that others enjoy it, if we refuse it admittance into our hearts. That will only aggravate our condemnation. For "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And "what shall the end of them be that obey not the Gospel?"

2. Let us bear our part in the promulgation of the Gospel. Every one can do something, and what he can, he is bound to do. In doing it, we fall in with the counsel of God in His blessed Word, we render the best service to our fellow-creatures, and we promote our own edification. Let each earn the testimony, "he hath done what he could."

IX.

The Work of the Spirit in the Character and Ministry of Barnabas.

"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 24.



THE Spirit is sovereign in the bestowment of His gifts and graces. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." At the same time, while the work of the Spirit sanctifies and elevates, it does not destroy the natural character. This is exemplified in many ways. If we take those who have been employed to write the Scriptures, although it is true that all which they have written has been given by inspiration of God, yet each is found to retain and use the style that is natural to him. The Spirit speaks by the faculties of the man in a way exactly adapted to them. Hence every writer has his own style. It is the same in the development of the religious and moral character. They are all taught, and quickened, and sanctified by the Spirit; yet the children of God retain their own peculiarities. Peter ever appears the earnest, impetuous, faithful follower of his Master, subject, however, to a want of steadfastness betimes. Stephen resembled him in many traits of his character, but never flinched under any of the strong temptations that befel him. Paul was equal to them in all attainments, and far excelled them in some. And now we proceed to the consideration of a character in some respects different from all the rest. In Barnabas there was a tenderness which does not appear in the others. He is called in one place "a son of consolation." He enjoyed, almost beyond any other, the confidence of the early Church. We find him sent on almost every delicate and difficult mission. And his character is comprehensively and beauti-

fully described in the text—"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."

Following the order of these words, we may notice—1. his goodness—"a good man;" 2. the source of it—"full of the Holy Ghost;" 3. the means by which the Spirit produced and cherished it—"faith;" and, 4. his success—"much people was added unto the Lord." May the Lord raise up many such, and make us what He made Barnabas.

I. "He was a good man."

There is, perhaps, no title which we should be more desirous to attain. It is doubtful whether there is any that conveys the same ideas of human excellence. We may say of another, he is a zealous man, or a clever man, or a generous man; but none of these expressions causes us to think so highly of him as when it is said, "He is a good man."

What does it mean? The peculiar idea attached to it seems to be brought out distinctly in such a passage as Rom. v. 7, where it is written, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die." Goodness is put in contrast with righteousness. The latter, however excellent, does not so impress us that we should feel inclined to suffer great trials, particularly to die, for the sake of him who was admitted to possess it. But the former does beget such a feeling toward its subject as would cause us to endure much, if not even death itself, on account of it. This is quite compatible with our nature. A righteous man is one whose principles are sound and firm. He takes the divine law for his guide, and will not be induced to abandon it. He will do justice to all men, cost what it may. He is inflexible. His character commands our respect. It may even fill us with admiration. Yet it may not attract our love. There may be uncompromising faithfulness in it, but sternness also. Severity may attach to it, and, with all our admiration and respect, it may rather repulse than attract us. It does not produce that kind of feeling that would make us willing to die for such a one. It is different with goodness. This contains the essential elements of righteousness, but they are accompanied with a kindness and tenderness that make their way to our hearts. While there is such firmness that the good

man will not yield to the temptations that would draw him aside from the paths of integrity and purity, there is also a generosity that calls forth our gratitude, and a certain kindliness that excites our love. We feel as if there was nothing which we could not suffer as well as do for such a man. And we can thus quite understand the distinction of the Apostle, considering the peculiarity and attractiveness of goodness, that while "scarcely for a righteous man would one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die."

In Barnabas this trait was very marked, and we find an impressive illustration of it in the history of the context. It appears from the 19th verse that a great impulse was given to the early church by the death of Stephen. The blood of the martyr proved to be the seed of the church. "They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch." At Antioch, particularly, they had abundant success. "The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great multitude believed and turned unto the Lord." The report of these gracious influences soon spread abroad and led to new and important measures. "Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch." He went there, and here it is the character of this good man comes out. "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord." These were exactly the emotions and exercises we would have expected in a good man. "He saw the grace of God" in its happy effects on the new converts to whom he had been introduced. He was willing to see it. No narrow prejudice blinded his mind. No selfish feeling crept in upon his soul, because this great work had all been accomplished without him. He was large-hearted. It was only the good of others he desired, and it mattered not who had been the means of it. It was enough for him that it was done. He "was glad." Joy sprang up in his generous bosom when he saw that others had been blessed. It gave him more genuine delight than if he had gained thousands of silver and gold for himself. Souls were saved and the thought inspired him with the highest satisfaction. It was mingled, however, with deep concern. He knew how critical the position of these

converts was. It is therefore added, "he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." He longed to see their blessedness continued and encreased. He knew the dangers to which they were exposed and as a tender father, jealous of his children's welfare, he faithfully warned them. He knew also the high attainments to which by faithfulness and diligence they might rise, and so he encouraged them. Nor would he be unmindful of the good they might do to others as well as get to themselves. He was alive to the interests of the gospel, as these were involved in the perseverance of the converts at Antioch. If they proved themselves faithful men, what might they not do? But if they stumbled and fell what disasters they would bring upon themselves and others? He therefore exhorted them with great earnestness. He did more. We learn from the 25th verse, he took special measures to improve the present opportunity. "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul." He desired help in the work and he called on Paul to come and render it. There is something quite in accordance with his character that he was his own messenger. He thought it best to go and explain the whole matter so as to secure the sympathies of so able an auxiliary as Paul. He would leave nothing undone to turn this case to the very best account. In this journey he was successful. "When he had found him he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." We can readily suppose how heartily and harmoniously these two men worked together during that period. Many a time we find them associated in the same work afterwards. But at Antioch they seem to have left a deep impression behind them. It is said, "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." They had gained a place in the public eye, and must needs have some name to distinguish them from others. However it was given, whether in commendation or reproach, it was a happy cognomen. It is that one which has adhered to them ever since. It is most fitting as connecting them with Christ Himself. But all we have to say of it at present is, that it furnishes undoubted proof of the singular zeal and ability and success with which Barnabas had executed his mission to Antioch. Was he not a good man? The whole history of his conduct leaves upon our minds the indelible impression that goodness was the distinguishing trait of his character.

To know what goodness is, we need not therefore go beyond his history, as it is recorded here. It consists in a disposition to confer benefits upon others. It may be concerned for either the body or the soul and finds its happiness in saving either or both. It is a description of goodness when Christ tells us what He shall say to His people in the day of judgment as He welcomes them to His own heaven—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave drink; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." We must not suppose it is beneath the most sanctified goodness to be concerned for the temporal well-being of others. In itself that is of deep moment. And it has, besides, a mighty influence on their religious character. But goodness, if it be real and Christian, must not be confined to the body. It must be in us as it was in Barnabas. We do not suppose he neglected the temporal interests of the disciples at Antioch. We know his zeal in this very matter. When a collection was made for the poor saints at Jerusalem, it "was sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul",—shewing the interest he had taken in that measure. But still he had higher objects, and his goodness was concerned mainly for their spiritual and eternal interests. He knew, indeed, that the best way to provide for the body was to improve the mind. But independent of time altogether he laboured mainly for the soul. So also must we do, if we are good men like him. The highest interests of others must be dear to us; and we know who hath said, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." Let us learn from Barnabas what it is to earn the character of a "good man."

II. How shall such a character be formed? In the text it is ascribed to the Spirit. The goodness of Barnabas is accounted for on this ground, that he was "full of the Holy Ghost."

There are no doubt great natural constitutional differences among men. There is a sense in which some may be said to be naturally good, in comparison with others. They are kind, generous, and sympathetic. They are glad to see and make others happy. This natural disposition may be greatly promoted by education. It is especially susceptible of being cherished

and increased by parental and domestic example. Many instances might be quoted to excite our admiration and gratitude. Cornelius was manifestly such a person, even before he saw Peter, or knew the gospel of Christ. It is a blessed thing where such cases occur. They are twice blessed—blessed in those who give and those who receive. A large amount of human happiness may thus be circulated among men. Every thing that is possible should be done to form and promote such habits. The wellbeing of society is largely dependent on them. They are gifts of God, as any other natural endowments are. We should praise Him for them, and cultivate them in ourselves and others, just as we would do with any other gifts which he might confer on us in His providence.

All this we are willing cheerfully and gratefully to own. Yet there is a melancholy thought that mingles with the admission. All this amiability may exist apart from true godliness. It was attained in no inconsiderable degree by many of the ancient heathens of Greece and Rome, and may be found in not a few in our own day, of the heathen of India. Instances are not wanting among ourselves where it is associated with a distaste to true religion, if not a strong enmity against it. These two are by no means incompatible. Zaccheus seems to have been a man of benevolence before “salvation came to him or his house.” He said, and no doubt truly, “behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” And how affecting is the case of the young ruler, whose history is thus recorded, “He came running to Christ, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Jesus said unto him,—thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said to Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.” He was in a sense good, but not godly.

Goodness, as it was exemplified in Barnabas, is the work of

the Holy Ghost. Thus understood, it is distinctly testified, "the fruit of the Spirit is goodness." It has one feature which is not found in natural amiability. It apprehends spiritual as well as temporal interests. It aims at the conversion of the soul as well as the sustenance of the body. It longs for the holiness of its object as well as its happiness. It seeks the glory of God as well as the good of the creature. It is the inspiration of the Spirit, and resembles its author. As He confers graces as well as gifts so the goodness which He creates desires both. He exalts graces above gifts, and so does the heart that is under His influence. It was He who taught the apostle to say, "though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." By charity, He means that love which inspired the bosom of Barnabas, and made him a good man. It was goodness, such as that of God, divine and heavenly. It springs out of God, and is the fruit of the Spirit. It is found only where the Spirit dwells. And wherever He does dwell, there it is. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness."

And as He begins this disposition, He nourishes it. It is therefore said of Barnabas, "he was full of the Holy Ghost." This was the secret source of his eminent goodness. He cultivated the Spirit. He sought, and obtained Him in increasing measures of knowledge, and holiness, and zeal. And we are to do the same. From Him we must derive an enlightened benevolence, that we may know how to be useful. To Him we must look for a pure benevolence, that we may do good in simplicity and godly sincerity. And by Him we must be endowed with patient perseverance in well-doing, acting on the command, "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Such goodness proclaims its author, and just as it is exercised, we are "full of the Holy Ghost."

III. In what manner does the Spirit produce it?

To this question we proceed to reply, in accordance with the text. Barnabas was "full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith;" the Spirit being given, and increased by means of his faith.

In this connection, faith may be understood of the principle of faith in the human mind. It is in this sense it is said, "the fruit of the Spirit is faith;" for it is classed with love, joy, and other similar graces. By this means the heart is brought under the dominion of one of the most powerful principles. It is said of faith, that "it purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world." It cleanses the defilement of sin and selfishness. It puts in motion the tenderest and strongest affections. And it exercises authority and control over the mightiest enemies. It is, therefore, a fitting instrument for the work of the Spirit. So He produces and cherishes it, until we are enabled to say, "by grace are we saved through faith."

It is, however, the object of faith that gives it so much power. That object is Jesus Christ. With it the Spirit engages the attention. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you." Thus He stimulates to goodness. For how great is the power of that example? "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Only suppose this example to be seen as the Spirit reveals it, and to be felt as He applies it, and what must be its influence over the heart? What is any self-denial we can exercise in comparison with it? What are any sufferings we can endure when measured by this standard? We are ashamed to speak of them. This is the true philosophy, when the Holy Spirit, to lead us to goodness, causes us to look unto Jesus, "who went about doing good." His labours stimulate ours. His patience and zeal provoke ours. We are made to feel, there is nothing too great to be done, or too hard to be endured for Him who died and suffered so much for us. We are thus filled with the Holy Ghost while our faith keeps us "looking unto Jesus."

At the same time, His Word is the directory of our faith. It

instructs us in the good we are to do. It encourages us by countless examples. It animates by many motives. It excites by precious promises. It warns us by solemn and seasonable threatenings. It teaches us to pass the brief period of time in the light and under the influence of eternity. It enables us to realise that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And thus, like Barnabas, are we enabled to be "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

To increase our faith, we should be constant in the study of the written Word, and earnest to find in it the living Word. With the one in our hand, we should seek to have the other in our heart. The first without the second is a dead letter. With it, it is life to the soul.

IV. We have great encouragement to abound in this goodness, by witnessing the blessed issue in the case of Barnabas—"Much people was added unto the Lord."

His ministry was a fruitful one. God blessed his labours in the conversion and edification of many souls. We find him again and again in the history of the Church. But it is almost universally in connection with some gracious revival and large extension of religion. We are very sure he had a blessed reward in the fruit of his toil, both as he saw the grace of God manifested in it on the earth, and especially as he beheld it in the glories of eternity.

Let us remember that in this, as well as in his character and attainments, he is proposed as an example to us.

We are assured that as we labour aright in the cause of God we shall be more or less successful. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The seed may lie long and seem to us to have perished. But the promise is sure. "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The meanest service we can render shall not pass unnoticed or unrewarded. "Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Whether we do good to the bodies or the souls of men, if the spirit be right, "God is well pleased."

There is, however, a special honour in doing saving good to the souls of men. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins." This was the field in which Barnabas laboured. Let it be ours. A most gracious promise is made to those who shall be successful in it. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." O! if we realised such words, how earnest would we be in cultivating the character of Barnabas—"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

What an example to ministers of the Gospel—to parents—to the teachers of our Sabbath schools—to every member of the Church of Christ. It is to all Jesus says—all who are His disciples—"Ye are the light of the world; ye are the salt of the earth." Let every one learn what he ought to be—"a good man;" what he ought to seek for—"to be full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and what he may expect, as he is faithful—that much people shall be added to the Lord." They shall be added to the Church on earth, and to the society of the redeemed in heaven. O that on the tomb of every one of us might be found the epitaph, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

The Work of the Spirit in the First Missionaries of the Christian Church.

“The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”—Acts xiii. 2.



THE relation of the Church to the world is expressed in the 1st chapter of this book, at the 8th verse, in these words—“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The Church is the witness for Christ to the world. It is a missionary institute designed and commanded to make His name known to all nations for the obedience of the faith. The provision made for such a purpose is complete. Every genuine member of it is, in heart and spirit, himself a missionary. No matter what is his earthly calling, he is desirous that all should know the truth which has become precious to himself, and he does what he can to promote it. By his example, his counsel, and his contribution, he labours for the extension of true religion. If he does not so, he gives evidence that he is a member of the Church only in name, and not in reality; or he is unfaithful, and he may expect the sentence, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away.” As this is the spirit of each, so in the union of the Church the same prevails. It is an organisation to carry that spirit more effectually into execution. Counsels are held, co-operation is agreed upon, united prayers are offered, and the members of the Church “strive together for the faith of the Gospel.” If it be not so, the Church falls short of one great design of its establishment.

In the text we are presented with a fine example of a Church

faithful in this duty. It furnishes a model for all generations, and we propose to consider it carefully. In the 1st verse we learn the Church at Antioch was favoured with many distinguished members ; in the 2d verse, that they were accustomed to engage in special and earnest exercises, in order to know the will of God and their duty—in the same we find that the Spirit owned their prayers and directed their counsels ; in the 3d, we find them publicly setting apart the men who had been appointed to their special work ; and in the sequel of this chapter, and the whole of the succeeding, we are favoured with the details of the work in a history of their proceedings. Here was a missionary Church indeed. Let us contemplate it under these views.

1. The church at Antioch was highly favoured and distinguished. We read, "There were in it certain prophets and teachers : as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." What a company ! Let us review it for a moment.

Barnabas. We are well acquainted with his character and ministry. He was the chief companion and colleague of Paul. He enjoyed very largely the confidence of the early Church. More than any other person, he seems to have been deputed on important missions. Great faithfulness and tenderness seem to have been united in him. "He was a good man, and full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

Simeon is not so much known. He was called Niger. The word means dark, probably in reference to his complexion. Hence the term negro of our day. And this suggests an interesting thought. He was, perhaps, a foreigner, who had learned the truth in Judea. And though not a Jew, nor educated as the apostles had been, yet he had attained to the position of a teacher or prophet in the Church.

Lucius, of Cyrene, also had come from a distant part. He is mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. It is remarkable to find how many of these distinguished men were strangers. While those who lived in the midst of privileges slighted them, others whose opportunities were less, embraced them, and were raised to honour and usefulness.

Of Manaen it is said, "he had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch." This is the only notice we have of him, but it is

an important one. He was like Moses at the court of Pharaoh. He was reared in the household of one of the bitterest enemies of the gospel, yet he believed it, and professed it, and became a minister. Man can no more keep out the truth than he can the air which penetrates into his innermost chambers. We read of disciples in Cæsar's household.

Saul is mentioned last, but it is unnecessary to say he was not the least. He is too well known to require that anything should be said of him. His own remark was, "they glorified God in me."

Such were some of the men of the Church at Antioch. We see what the Spirit of God can do. How soon He can raise up instruments for His work. O! that we only asked Him to do it. It is much needed in our time. Yet there is nothing to hinder why any Church should not be another Antioch, if we only obeyed the command of Christ, "pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

2. Consider the special exercises in which these servants of the Lord engaged. "They ministered to the Lord, and fasted."

This was the custom of the early Church. At the very beginning we read, "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." In this their strength lay. It is easy to see what a mighty influence it would exercise over them. It would greatly promote their *union*. When men meet together for debate or discussion, disagreement is almost inevitable, considering the nature of the human mind; but when they meet for prayer, it sweetly harmonizes their views and feelings. It keeps alive their *zeal*. They are thus brought into immediate contact with God, and while they drink at that fountain they cannot but be refreshed and invigorated. It brings down the divine *blessing*. It is fitting that it should do so, for while it expresses on the one hand a sense of dependence, it no less declares on the other that confidence in God with which He is well pleased. Hence, just as the Church has prayed it has prospered.

On this occasion it is clear the engagement was very special. Fasting was joined with prayer, to render it more solemn and effective. The design was, no doubt, to learn what might be the mind of God in their future plans and labours. So many great men must not spend their strength on one Church, however important that might be. The world was before them, and they

asked counsel of the Lord how they should proceed for its evangelisation. Their cry was, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?" They were willing to be, or do, or suffer, as the will of God might direct.

This is the right spirit. We are not to wait idly until circumstances arise that compel us to act. We must not rest in our own ease and comfort while sinners are perishing. It is not enough that we enjoy our own privileges. Others must be cared for. And our duty is to cry mightily to the Lord like these men at Antioch until we learn what is the path of duty.

3. They soon obtained an answer. "The Holy Ghost said, separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

How would this intelligence be regarded by the Church at Antioch? Did they consider it hard to be deprived of their teachers? Nothing of the kind appears. It cannot be doubted, there was a cheerful concurrence in this demand. The claims of the world were felt to be paramount. Antioch had enjoyed the services of Paul and Barnabas for "a whole year," and it was reasonable others should now share in their advantages.

Let it be observed also who were the men selected. Paul and Barnabas. They were manifestly in all respects the greatest men of the place. In comparison the others are little known. Yet these were the men to go out on missionary labour, while the others remained. It is impossible to read these simple records without feeling the reproof which they administer to the Church of our times. If ministers are to be sent abroad, how reluctant we are that these should be men who have been distinguished by usefulness and ability. We are fain to suppose others, more easily spared, may suffice. We need to learn another lesson. If the work of the Lord is to be done in the earth, we must send Paul and Barnabas, the best men in the Church. Until this is the spirit that shall prevail, we cannot reckon on success.

Blessed be God, many have proved themselves such in the foreign field. Some of the greatest men of the day are the missionaries of the cross. Not to speak of living men, what an array we have in Brainerd, and Martin, and Carey, and Williams, and Morrison, and countless more. They became great in their work. But it is a question whether, had they been as great when in

their youth, they were sent forth, the Church at home would not have endeavoured to retain their services to themselves ?

Yet mark who it is that claims such men. "The Holy Ghost is the speaker; He says, separate Me Barnabas and Saul." Not only so, He adds, "for the work whereunto I have called them." None must go but they whom the Spirit calls. And they must go to the special work to which He calls them. But the men that He calls are those whom He has furnished, as He did Paul and Barnabas, and the work to which He calls them is the evangelisation of the world. He demands the best men for the best work; the highest qualifications for the highest engagements. Surely the missionary and his work may justly be placed in this category. His is the highest office on the earth.

4. So these men were appointed. "When they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

This notice of the ordination of Barnabas and Paul raises a curious question, whether they had not been previously ordained? There is no notice of it in their former history. Paul began to preach as soon as he was converted. There is no account of any special appointment to the ministry. Barnabas is brought before us in the record in the same way; no notice of his ordination, but of his work. Yet there is no doubt they had both been long actively and successfully engaged in the work of the ministry.

This is an important view of the subject. Whatever may be said of the peculiarity of their case, having been so immediately called by the Spirit, it yet deserves our consideration. It certainly teaches that the ordination is less important than the qualification. Especially it proves that the qualification must precede the ordination. No ordination will entitle a man to exercise the ministry who has not been previously endowed with the necessary gifts and graces by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, if a man has these gifts and graces, ordained or unordained, he ought to exercise them. By all means let him be ordained. But should it so occur that this cannot be had, let him proceed without it. The Spirit will own him, although man has refused to do so. There are two things that seem essential, the fitness of the man and the call of the Church who have experienced his capacity to instruct them. This being had, the essentials are found.

Yet we do not undervalue ordination. Barnabas and Saul

received it. They thus had the full sanction of the whole Church to their mission, and they both needed and deserved it. This example we are to imitate, and to give the sanction of a public ordination to those who have been proved worthy to exercise the ministry.

Besides, much good may otherwise arise out of this service. It is both instructive and impressive. Especially the sign employed in it, the laying on of hands, is the acknowledgment of a great principle to be kept continually in mind. It is an admission of our dependence on the Spirit in the whole work. While that admission is made we may hope to realize the blessing. Paul and Barnabas had the Spirit before, but He was no doubt then given afresh in a more abundant measure and in peculiar preparation for the work upon which they were about to enter. This is implied in the term that they "were sent forth by the Holy Ghost." And such is the grand idea of ordination still, that in it they in whom the Spirit already dwells shall be sent forth by Him to do His work, by His continued and increased blessing, furnishing them more and more for it by the necessary gifts and graces in so high and responsible a calling.

5. Let us then now consider the work in which these men of God did engage.

The details are profoundly interesting and most instructive. Suppose we had been at Antioch when Barnabas and Paul returned from their mission how anxious we would have been to hear the results. Here, then, they are. They are given extensively yet minutely. And we shall notice them in the order of the narrative.

"They departed unto Seleucia." There they do not appear to have found an opening, and nothing was done. Perhaps they were disappointed. But we must wait the Lord's time and way to give a door of entrance.

"Thence they sailed to Cyprus and went to Salamis." There "they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." These openings were graciously found in most places in those days. The apostles were generally admitted to the synagogues. But nothing remarkable occurred. They were heard but we do not read of any success. The faith of the Missionary is often tried by delays.

"When they had gone through the isle"—probably preaching

every where—they came “unto Paphos,” and a notable scene occurred there. “The deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.” No doubt he had heard of their mission in the island. In his household, however, “there was a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus.” He “withstood the Apostles, and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith.” His opposition roused the zeal of Paul, and in name of the Lord he pronounced upon him the judgment of blindness. It fell upon him, and the consequence was, “the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” This was the first great encouragement.

Trouble, however, soon came. “When Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.” He had joined the missionary band, to aid them in their work. His zeal, however, soon abated. His departure was painful to the Apostles. It was against their desire, and must have proved a “heavy blow and great discouragement.” This is clear from a subsequent notice, where we learn that when on another occasion Barnabas was desirous that John should accompany him and Paul, the latter “thought not good to take him with them who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” Unhappily the contention was so sharp between these two eminent Apostles, that they parted company. How sad when there is internal weakness or strife. At this time, however, they were united in lamenting the loss of their fellow-labourer, and they left Perga without having had any single success there.

Thence “they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down.” They were invited, according to the custom of the synagogue, to address a word of exhortation to the people. Paul did so at length, and embraced the opportunity to preach the gospel. The word was blessed. The Gentiles, some of whom were present, “besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” “Many of the Jews and religious proselytes also (who were probably the Gentiles mentioned) followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” Such was the impression of their visit that the “next

Sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God." This must have been highly encouraging to the missionaries. But alas! their success led them into great trials. "The Jews, filled with envy, spake against what they had heard, contradicting and blaspheming." This led the Apostles faithfully to warn them and proclaim the conversion of the Gentiles. At this time many of them "heard and glorified the word of the Lord." Such was the opening among them that the "word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." But this the Jews could not endure. "They therefore stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts."

Thus driven from Antioch they came to Iconium, and very exciting scenes occurred there. At first "a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." They persisted, however, "speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony to the word of His grace." The consequence was, "the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the Apostles." At length "an assault was made of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them." This they considered an intimation from the Lord that their work was finished for the present in Iconium, and so they fled from the rage of their enemies. Such is the enmity of the human heart, and of Satan who rules it, against the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Their next halting place was Lystra. Their mission commenced there with restoring a cripple who never had walked. The people was so impressed by it that they said "the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," and they proceeded to offer them divine honours. This, however, as would be expected of them, they nobly resisted. But soon other hindrances arose. "There came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." Their old persecutors followed them, and so, at their instigation, those who would have worshipped them to-day were ready to murder them to-morrow. They were treated like their Master.

The next day, Paul having been restored contrary to all expectation, they went to Derbe. They appeared to have found some rest if not success in that place. It is only recorded "they preached the gospel and taught many." May we hope the day of judgment will reveal abundant fruit.

Thus far they had proceeded when they deemed it right to retrace their steps. "They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch." They were not deterred by all they had previously suffered in some of these places. Much needed to be done still, and they did it, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The Church, also, which they had planted, needed to be put in order. So "when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed, with fasting, they recommended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." This circumstance is evidence of two things,—of the success that had been attained in those places, where elders were needed and suitable persons were found for the office, and of the zeal, and wisdom, and efficiency with which these Apostles had done their duty.

In the same way, and no doubt for like purposes, they continued their home journey, "passing through Pisidia," "coming to Pamphylia," "preaching the Word in Perga," "going down into Attalia," and thence "sailing to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

Their reception at Antioch was worthy of the Church that had deputed them. "When they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." It is assumed that the Church was concerned in this mission. It behoved to know what had been done, and to take steps accordingly. It held itself to be charged with the great work of evangelizing the earth. It had sent out, and now received again its honoured missionaries. And they gave a full report of their proceedings to those who had employed them; and to whom, though the Apostles of the Spirit, they were held to be responsible.

It is added to this narrative, with all the simplicity of truth, "that they abode long time with the disciples." They rested to

recruit their bodies and refresh their spirits. It reminds us of the conduct of Christ toward the Apostles, after the violent death of John the Baptist. "They took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus." With kind consideration, "he said unto them, come into a desert place and rest awhile." And they did so. The missionary must have rest. He needs it, and it prepares him for his work again. Even in this, which to some persons may seem to be unimportant, we have the high example and authority of Christ and His Apostles.

How many and important are the lessons to be drawn from this whole subject?

1. The gospel of Christ is commended to us personally as the one thing needful. This is assumed in all the efforts required to be made for its propagation. Cost what it may, we are required to publish it to all men. And why? Because it is "the one thing needful." If, then, it be thus important to others, it cannot be less so to us. If they need it, so do we. They and we are alike perishing without it. Have we then received it ourselves? Let us not rest until we have evidence that we have "believed to the saving of the soul."

2. We are bound to bear our part in propagating it. Individually and unitedly, we are responsible for its extension. We are called upon to provide the missionaries, sustain them, pray for them, and confer with them. It is our business. We cannot get free of it. As the Church of Christ, we have undertaken that obligation. And we are bound, while we provide ministers for ourselves, to provide missionaries for others.

3. We must not stumble at the difficulties that will arise in the prosecution of the work. Wherever the Apostles had success they had trials. We are to lay our account with the same. They only prove that Satan is alarmed for his kingdom. We can have only one motto—Onward. And by ourselves or others, we must act on the command, "Preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." Remember Antioch, and "go and do thou likewise."

XI.

The Work of the Spirit in the First Council at Jerusalem.

"It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."—Acts xv. 28.



THE question of Church government occupies its proper place in the divine word. It is there represented to be important, chiefly, if not exclusively, on account of its connection with the truth, as being more or less fitted to present and apply it to the heart and conscience of men. Sometimes it is treated by men as a mere system unconnected with sound doctrine or practical godliness, and wherever this is done it is misplaced. Zeal for forms of government, thus exhibited, is indicative of a low state of religion in the heart and life. At other times, a form of government is adhered to with much tenacity because it is believed and experienced to be more calculated than any other to give the Word free course among the children of men, and then its importance cannot be too highly estimated.

In examining the subject in the light of the Scriptures, it will be found that the form of government for the Church grew out of the circumstances in which it was placed. It was not set up at once as a system, but arose gradually as its several provisions were required for the work that needed to be done. Thus, our Lord called His Apostles, when they were necessary as instructors of the people. So the ministry of the word arose. The Deacons were appointed when the claims of the temporal affairs of the Church rendered their services essential to good order, and not sooner. And the first council was called at Jerusalem, when the state of affairs at the Church of Antioch demanded such interference and consideration. Thus the entire polity of the New Tes-

tament Church arose out of the work that was to be done. Nothing was instituted for the sake of the mere form.

At present our attention is called to the last of these appointments—the General Council of the Church at Jerusalem—and we shall consider it as it is presented in the history of the chapter before us. Here we have the occasion out of which it sprung, the remedy proposed to meet the difficulty that had arisen, the implied constitution of the Council itself, its proceedings, the decision, and its results. Let these particulars be noticed in their order.

1. The occasion out of which it arose. This is stated in the 1st verse thus—“And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

These men were professing Christians. They had been Jews, but were converted to the faith of the Gospel. They were admitted to its membership, and regarded as brethren.

It is plain, however, they were still powerfully under the influence of their former views and practices. They had renounced the form, but retained much of the spirit, of Judaism. They are known in history under the appellation of Judaising teachers, and the name is properly expressive of their spirit and character. Under a profession of Christianity, they would largely restore the ancient Judaism.

This was a most dangerous innovation. It struck at the very foundation of Gospel truth. The great principle of the Apostles had been to “know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Here, however, a new doctrine was introduced, and urged with great earnestness and tenacity. Some of the Jewish converts insisted on those from among the Gentiles, that they should submit to the rites which had been observed towards themselves. They argued, “Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved.” The doctrine of the cross, they allowed, was good; but they must have circumcision too. The outward rite, they held, was necessary to give validity to the truth of Christ. There was no salvation without it, according to their view.

This was a subtle error. The Gospel might be nominally retained, but if this view of it were entertained, its precious redemption was in reality abandoned. Yet it gave sad trouble to the early Church. In almost all his epistles, we find the Apostle Paul contending against it. The design of his entire

Epistle to the Galatians is to expose and refute it. "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ will profit you nothing." If circumcision, as had been alleged, was essential, then Christ was insufficient.

Yet this is an error by which the Church has been disturbed and the truth obscured in every age. It is the essence of the Puseyism of our own times. It is human nature at the old work of discrediting a full and free salvation, and seeking to restore a mere ritual religion. It is an effort to put the form in the room of the power of religion.

How distressing to find the Church so early disturbed by this fundamental error! Even amid all the light and authority of the Apostles, men could not be restrained from teaching and urging it. It has never been destroyed altogether. It clings to the human mind in all its conditions. The teaching of the Spirit alone will free the Church from its intrusion. We need to be guarded against it. And the warning of the passage before us should not be unheeded.

Such was the occasion of the first Council at Jerusalem. Let us now consider—

2. The remedy proposed to meet the difficulty. It is thus expressed at the 2d verse—"When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the Apostles and Elders, about this question."

It is important to observe how early the Christian Church had learned that no question was to be determined by mere authority. If any man had been entitled to rule and dictation, surely Paul and Barnabas, and the other distinguished teachers and prophets in the Church at Antioch, were the men. But they assumed no such power. They argued and discussed, but used no authority. It is a fine example of an appeal, not to force, but to reason. And it shows how far the Christian Church, even in its infancy, had improved on all other systems.

This appeal to Jerusalem, however, was rendered necessary by the failure of every other attempt to settle this agitating controversy. "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them." We may well believe they had said all and done all that men could do to preserve the truth and restore

harmony. It was, however, ineffectual. All their deserved influence and power were in vain. The errorists persisted in maintaining their views. And thus that Church of Antioch, which had been the admiration of all men, became a scene of contention and confusion, which its own resources proved insufficient to correct.

It was reasonable that, in such circumstances, the proposed remedy should be adopted. The Church at Jerusalem was the strongest and most enlightened that had yet been formed. The Apostles generally dwelt there. No doubt, it was customary to seek counsel there. It was the resort in cases of difficulty and trouble. And it was most natural and reasonable that the eyes of the Church at Antioch should be turned to Jerusalem in their present extremity.

Hopes would, no doubt, be entertained that thus this cause of contention would be removed. It does not appear whether all the parties concurred in this appeal. The Church at Antioch desired it. But it is doubtful if the men who introduced the evil did so. It seems they had come from Jerusalem. This is distinctly stated at the 24th verse—"Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment." They had been doing their mischievous work even at the very seat of apostolical influence. In their zeal they travelled to Antioch, that they might excite disturbance there. It is not probable, therefore, that these men relished an appeal to Jerusalem. Yet it could not well be resisted. There the united sentiment of the Christian Church could best be obtained. Thence a judgment would come forth with more prospect of being favourably regarded than from any other quarter. What a blessed consummation if it would be the means of settling the present agitations. All things, therefore, considered, the remedy of an appeal to Jerusalem was proposed and adopted.

This is a fine example of the earnest desire of the early Church to maintain peace, and hinder contentions. We can readily imagine the pain and anxiety which these proceedings caused to the Church at Antioch, and especially to the distinguished ministers there. But they knew the importance of the time. They left no means untried to heal the divisions that had arisen. And

with an earnest desire and anxious hope that the threatening evils might be averted, they adopted the remedy that was now decided upon.

3. This leads us to consider the constitution of the proposed council.

It is manifest at the outset that it was representative. Certain persons were deputed from Antioch to state the case of the Church there, and obtain advice and direction. It is equally plain, there must have been a representation of the Church at Jerusalem. They could not all meet in one place. There had been three thousand added to it on the day of Pentecost. We read subsequently of large additions that were made to it. A deliberative assembly could not be held, composed of all this multitude. Certain persons must have been chosen at Jerusalem as had been done at Antioch. It is very possible, too, that from other places others may have come up to Jerusalem on a question of such vital importance. We are far from supposing that any precise rules had been laid down for the conduct of the whole procedure. These would be largely guided by the circumstances. But it is clear the principle of representation had been adopted as the only one practicable in the case.

The history gives us insight to the members who constituted the council. The apostles and elders are mentioned frequently and prominently. It is said in the 2d verse, "they should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about the question." Again at the 6th verse we read, "the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter." As to the apostles there can be no difficulty. All who dwelt at Jerusalem, and any who might come from other places, would be members of the council. There is more difficulty about the elders. Who, and what were they? The term is frequently used to signify ministers of the word. Both Peter and John apply the word to designate themselves and their office. "The elder unto the elect body," is the salutation of John. Peter says, "the elders which are among you I exhort, who also am an elder." But it is clear there were others besides ministers to whom this name is sometimes applied. It is thus said in the 14th chapter of this book, that Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every Church;" in those places where their ministry had been successful. "Elders in every Church." There was more than one. There was a plurality.

Who and what were they? Another passage gives light on the question. In 1 Tim. v. 17, it is written, "let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." There were then two classes of elders. There were those who laboured in word and doctrine, and those who did not. What was the special office of this latter class? It must have been to join with the others in the exercise of rule and government, while they did not preach the word. This distinction explains and accounts for the plurality of elders in every Church. Several were associated with him or them that preached the word, in the government of the Church. Out of that class, there is reason to conclude, from the general use of the term elders, there were some representatives at the council of Jerusalem. We are not sure, however, that these were the only members. Mention is frequently made of the Church as having taken a deep interest in this council, and having had some participation in it. At the 3d verse, we read that Paul and Barnabas, with their companions, were "brought on their way by the Church." At the 4th verse there is a more explicit statement, "they were received of the Church, and of the apostles and elders." A distinction is made between the Church and those who bore office in it. At the 12th verse it is said, "all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." More than apostles and elders were present, whether they were members of the council or not. But there is something farther suggested by verse 22, "the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, sent chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul." And again the same thought is repeated in verse 23, "the apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia." How are we to understand "the Church, and the brethren?" The whole membership of the Church cannot be meant, for they could not all be present. There must have been a representation. But what was it? Did it consist of the apostles, and more particularly of the elders associated with them? It may have been so. Or was there besides a representation from the membership of the Church, as distinguished from the apostles and elders? We cannot say it was not so. This minute question must remain undecided. But however understood, one thing is clear, that in the early Church there

was a very free expression of sentiment, and a very full representation of the mind of the whole membership of the Church in their public deliberative assemblies.

Such was the constitution of the first council at Jerusalem. It was wisely and well ordered. It was well calculated to do justice to every question submitted to its judgment. At the same time it was worthy of the confidence of the Church. It was well guarded on both sides; on the one, against any undue exercise of apostolical or ministerial authority, and on the other, against the clamour or prejudice of a multitude. It was worthy of the Great Head of the Church, and of the Spirit by which He presided over it. Let us then go on and notice—

4. The proceedings of the council.

We have a record of the principal speakers and of the sentiments which they expressed.

Peter spoke first. This was like him. And on this occasion it became him. It was suitable to his years, and especially to his position, as he who had been employed first to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. He referred to that circumstance and showed that his preaching to them had been owned by the Holy Ghost, without any regard to circumcision or any other rite. He protested against the requirement of such an observance as “a yoke which even the Jews were not able to bear.” And he concluded with the great principle of the gospel, “we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Salvation was by faith and not by ceremonies.

He was followed by Barnabas and Paul who spoke in the same strain. “They declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” It is most noticeable how the line of argument pursued by all was the same—showing that in point of fact the Spirit had owned the preached word independent of circumcision or any other rite. The fact was held to be conclusive. If God owned the word without circumcision, then the former was sufficient without the latter.

James came forward next, and appropriately so, as having a close connection with the church at Jerusalem. He referred to the sentiments expressed by his fellow labourer, Peter, and proceeded to confirm them by an appeal to the Scriptures. He showed that the facts referred to by him and the other speakers were only such as prophecy led them to expect. It foretold the

success of the gospel among the Gentiles. He interpreted the "building up of the tabernacle of David" by the reception of the Gentiles into the church. And the fact that the Gentiles had come into the Christian church without any use of circumcision he held to be conclusive, that the mind of God was seen to be their continued reception and retention without reference to that rite.

How important it is to see how these men of God exalted the truth above every ceremony. What a reproof to those in our day who make the rite everything and the doctrine of little moment. We might suppose they had in their view the degeneracy of our own times, when so many would go back from a free gospel to the yoke of ceremonies. Let us be admonished by the records of the council at Jerusalem, which are written for our instruction.

5. The decision of the council was in accordance with the views that had been expressed. It was proposed by James in the words of vers. 19—20. "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and blood." So far as the primary question was concerned the decision was clear. Circumcision was pronounced to be not essential to salvation.

It deserves to be remarked, however, nothing is said of Jewish converts. As the Gentiles would be nothing better for being circumcised, so the Jews would be nothing worse. If their prejudices led them to practise it they might do so till they obtained clearer light. It was a misconception of the gospel to think it binding on any. Yet there was toleration for the remaining darkness, and a patient waiting for fuller light and more consistent conduct.

Other parts of the decision are equally clear. "They were required to abstain from idols and fornication." This is sufficiently plain. Such practices were utterly inconsistent with the religion of Christ and could not be tolerated in its membership.

But there is not a little obscurity in the remainder of the decree. They were to "abstain from things strangled and from blood." These had been forbidden by the law of Moses, and we may suppose either that the Apostles themselves had not got

entirely free from their own prejudices, or that, although they had, they yielded in these cases to the harmless prejudices of the Jewish members of the church. Or, as is more likely, the reference was to practices among the Gentiles, for it was to them the council wrote. They were accustomed to seize upon the animals of the desert or the chase and eat them in their blood. The habit was heathenish and savage. It was unbecoming in Christians. The council therefore set their faces against it. A pure Christian morality forbade it. And, therefore, it was classed in the decree with fornication and idolatry.

We have said the decree, for this is the form applied to the decision in the next chapter. At the 4th verse it is said, "as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem." Their decision was held to be binding. If any objected to it, it was not forced upon them by stern authority. But it was assuredly expected and required to be obeyed. If any persisted in opposing it and still demanded circumcision, or practised the forbidden deeds of idolatry, impurity, and cruelty, they could not be retained in the membership of the church. The decision of the council was manifestly held and, in its own nature deserved, to be binding on the church.

6. The results show it was so considered at the time.

The record of its communication to the church at Antioch is full of interest and instruction. We read at ver. 30. "So when they were dismissed they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the Epistle; which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas (who had been deputed from the council to Antioch) being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

The church acquiesced in the decision. It quieted the agitations that had prevailed for a time. The Spirit who had prompted the measure blessed it. And thus a model is left upon record for the settlement of controversies in all ages. The history of the council of Jerusalem teaches us how we are ever to act in similar emergencies.

From the whole subject, there are three conclusions which should be pressed earnestly on our attention.

1. We should be thankful for the Scriptural polity of the

Church. Our free Assembly is the exact counterpart of the Jerusalem Council. Many efforts have been made in the lapse of ages to supersede and destroy it. In some sections of the Church, they have, alas! been successful. Blessed be God, it is still retained in our own. Let us observe it as a Scriptural institute. Never let us abridge the liberties of those whose interests are deeply involved in it. Let us wait upon it, remembering Christ is its Head, and the Holy Ghost is its animating Spirit. So observed, its decisions will be blessed of God and respected by men.

2. The great end of ecclesiastical polity is to preserve the truth. It was to guard the doctrine of justification by faith against the glosses and additions of men this Council of Jerusalem was called together and issued its decree. The outward polity may be the casket, but the jewel contained in it is the truth as it is in Jesus. What avails the casket if the jewel be lost? The jewel is precious without the casket, but the casket is of no value without the jewel. It is when both are preserved our interests are best secured.

3. We should inquire whether the truth so preserved to us has been applied with power to our heart and life. Even the truth, if not so applied, will profit us nothing. The Church at Antioch "rejoiced for the consolation." The truth, which was dear to them, was preserved, and they rejoiced in its light. So let us realise the promise of Christ—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

XII.

The Work of the Spirit in the Christian Ministry.

"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."—ACTS xx. 28.



HIS address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus was delivered by the Apostle Paul under the most affecting circumstances. He was on his last journey to Jerusalem, and he had a deep impression of coming troubles to both himself and the Church. He anticipated his own speedy removal from the earth, and therefore he spoke with all the solemnity of a farewell address to those in whose hands the interests of true religion were placed. "Behold," says he, "I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

Many proofs occur in this part of his history that such anticipations pervaded the Church respecting him. Of one prophet, Agabus, we read, at Cæsarea, "He took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." But how was he affected by these predictions? He was entreated not to go up to Jerusalem, and replied, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." In the same spirit he says in the passage before us, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." This was followed by an appeal to the assembled ministers on the fidelity of the course which he had pursued

towards them. And then he earnestly exhorted them to like fidelity, saying, in the language of the text, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

This is the ministry which the Holy Ghost requires, and we shall consider the Apostle's address, under his guidance, noticing its several clauses in the order in which they occur.

1. "Take heed unto yourselves."

Personal religion lies at the foundation of a faithful and successful ministry. It may please God to bless His own Word even in the mouth of an ungodly minister. It is recorded of Caiaphas, "Being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." The office was honoured in the person of a bad man. It may be so still, but we have not reason to expect it shall be so to any extent. It is written of the ancient prophets who were unfaithful, "I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." This is felt to be reasonable and right. A solemn obligation, therefore, lies on all who sustain the office of the ministry, first of all, to "take heed to themselves."

How is this to be done?

The minister of the Word should have clear and satisfactory evidence that he is himself a subject of that religion which he preaches to others. In plain terms, he ought never to assume nor exercise the office until he has reason to believe he is a converted man. This is an essential element in the qualification for the discharge of its duties. "The husbandman must first be partaker of the fruits," is the remark of the Apostle when he addresses Timothy on the subject of the ministry. The personal experience of religion is necessary to its being rightly understood. It may be learned as a system, but never so as to be really received in its spirit. The heart must feel its power before its nature can be properly known. The man who has seen affliction knows how to sympathise with others under it. And it is only the man who has himself passed through the exercises that are usually experienced in the conversion of the soul, who can speak of them suitably to others.

Nor should it be esteemed sufficient that there is undoubted evidence of a work of grace in the minister's own soul. He needs

to cultivate that work. In the midst of a sinful world, he is in much danger of decay in spirituality of mind. He may remain a true Christian, and yet lose the liveliness of spirit essential to the right performance of his duty. As we need constantly to recruit the health of the body by seasonably partaking of necessary food, so is it with the mind. If our health fail, we cannot perform the work in which we are engaged. And this is as applicable to the health of the soul as of the body.

Nothing, therefore, can compensate to the minister of the Word for the neglect of cultivating his own personal piety. He will have constant temptation to neglect it in the urgency of external duties. But let him beware. As one of old, he may have cause to complain, "They made me a keeper of the vineyard of others, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Let him maintain the spirit of prayer by the habit of it. No activity in labour will supply the place of the forgotten altar. Let him keep close to the meditation of the Word for his own personal improvement. No mere study will suffice, instead of devotional exercises. Let him see that he is "walking with God." Then only can he say to others, "We are going to the land of which the Lord hath spoken. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." He must "take heed to himself," that he may be profitable to others.

2. In conjunction with the cultivation of personal religion, he is required to "take heed to all the flock."

Neither must be an excuse for the neglect of the other. The minister is not to plead that the attention required to others has justified him in neglecting his own soul; nor will the culture of his own mind be a reason why others should be neglected. Indeed, it will be obvious that as his own mind is properly exercised, so he will be profitable to others. Suppose the preacher to ascend his pulpit in a careless, worldly spirit, and how soon is it manifest in the coldness that pervades the whole congregation? His want of a right spirit is felt in their want of edification. On the other hand, let him be enabled to take his place in a lively and earnest spirit, the influence soon makes its way to the hearts of those who hear him. The same is perhaps experienced still more in his private walk and habitual conversation. There is something to awaken and solemnise in the public duty that may be wanting in private. The real condition of mind is far more likely to appear in the latter than in the former. Suppose it to be

solemn and earnest, and wherever he goes he is spreading an influence favourable to godliness. Suppose it to be trifling and earthly, and who can trace the injurious effects? It is by taking heed to himself he must seek to be in a capacity to "take heed to all the flock."

In this counsel there is a conjunction of the universal and the particular that deserves special attention. All are to be watched over with care, but this implies that each is sedulously observed. We cannot take heed to all otherwise than by taking heed to each. The parent of a numerous family attends to them all, but it is by directing the parental eye or hand to every one as it may be needed for guidance or help. The shepherd takes heed to all the flock, but it is by looking carefully after each of them.

This duty of the ministry is very distinctly recognized in the Word. Our Lord has said, "who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" And the Apostle Paul has thus expressed his own purpose and practice, "whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." In the very passage before us he says, "watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Such a spirit is of extreme importance in the minister of the word. It is that he shall feel himself to be always under the solemn responsibilities of his office. His duty is not occasional only, but constant. Wherever he is, he is to appear as a minister of Christ. Whatever he does, it is as a minister of Christ. A halo of sacredness should be around his person and deportment, and he should never forget whose he is and whom he serves.

At the same time this counsel supposes that there is a seasonable and suitable attention to the various classes that constitute his flock. Each needs a special treatment as well as a special care. There are the young, and the injunction is, "feed my lambs." A provision is to be made for them suited to their tender years. There are the old, and a peculiar sympathy is required for their many infirmities of mind and body. Their time is to be short, and their opportunities few. Surely, therefore, the most should be made of their brief day, before they go hence and are no more seen on the earth. There are the sick, and in their be-

half there is the special injunction, "call for the elders of the Church." This is an opportunity which God gives to speak a word in season that ought to be carefully embraced. The heart is apt to be then more tender, and the ear more open to receive instruction. Impressions have often then been made that have happily lasted during life. There are the healthy and active. They are encompassed with cares and disappointed with the pursuits of the world. They need to be warned and dealt with in a way that is suited to their circumstances.

Not merely is there this classification of the flock requiring corresponding carefulness, but there is that also of the various relations in which they stand to one another. These are pointedly noticed by the Apostle Paul in more than one of his Epistles. He gives special counsel to husbands and wives, masters and servants, parents and children. The same necessity still exists. Each must have a portion in season. Guidance and encouragement and warning require to be addressed to them, adapted to their duty and danger. If this is omitted, an important means of edification is lost.

There are also the various states of mind in which the different members of the flock may be supposed to be. Some are hardened, and they need to be warned. How solemn the words, "that wicked man will die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." There are those who mourn in Zion. They need the tenderness of wise and affectionate sympathy. There are the inquiring, and they are to be encouraged and directed. Every mind is a little world by itself, having its own interests and associations, and cares, and it devolves on the ministry of the word to study its advancement and benefit.

All and each! Let these be the watchwords of the faithful minister. Alas! it is to be feared this duty has been very imperfectly discharged. In some cases the numbers intrusted to a single minister have raised an obstacle which he has been unable to surmount. The Lord, however, knows his position,—both his facilities and difficulties. Only let him remember and constantly cherish the command, and seek grace to act upon it,—“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.”

3. This is appropriately followed by the solemn consideration, “over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,” and we proceed to consider it.

In this thought a powerful motive is employed to enforce ministerial fidelity. It may be viewed under several aspects.

It reminds us that the ministry itself is the institute of the Holy Ghost. He appointed it. Our Lord Himself said, as He entered on its public duties, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel." And it is with special reference to the work of the Spirit the apostle has said, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In accordance with this view the ministry has ever been the great instrument in the ingathering and building up of the Church. "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It is in its own nature adapted to these gracious purposes. By it men are taught, warned, and encouraged. How then ought such an office to be sustained? The very thought of its author ought to inspire a deep sense of responsibility. The consideration of its purpose ought to awaken the most anxious concern. Shall I sustain an office, whose author and object are so holy, and not tremble under the weight of it? Well may the minister cry, "who is sufficient for these things?" The fact that the ministry of the word is the institute of the Spirit, furnishes an overwhelming motive to faithfulness in the discharge of its duties.

Not merely, however, is the office His appointment, but every one who occupies it, if he be indeed a minister of Christ, has been called into it by the voice of the Spirit. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called, as was Aaron." Every faithful man must have satisfaction regarding his call before he will consent to occupy a station so responsible and important. A wise man has classed the necessary evidences of a ministerial call under these three, "graces, gifts, and fruits." He must have the personal graces of the Spirit, by which he will himself "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour," which he desires to recommend to others. He must have the gifts that are indispensable to qualify him for the performance of its high duties. The apostle sums these up under the one brief but comprehensive term, "apt to teach." And he must have fruits. Actuated by zeal to occupy the office of the ministry, he will be desirous to do good according to his opportunity. His taste and talent for

the work will appear in some incipient efforts to serve his day and generation. As "the Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson betimes in the camp of Dan ;" so will it be with him. As the people observed David in his youth, that he "behaved himself wisely ;" so will he do. There will be a concurrence in the general belief that he is fitted for the work to which he looks forward. He has "a good report of them that are without." And all this connected with his own ardent desires and persuasions, makes his way to the ministry plain. How then shall one so called act? What is to be the character and conduct of the man whom the Holy Spirit employs? Whom He calls He qualifies. He says to him as He said to Moses, in his fearfulness, "who hath made man's mouth? Have not I, saith the Lord?" He says to every one of His ministers as He said to Joshua, "as I was with Moses so will I be with thee." By the encouragements and warnings of the Spirit alike he is called to faithfulness.

It may be added, that even the special post which he occupies in the ministry has been assigned to him by the Spirit. When John saw Christ in His glory "He had seven stars in His right hand." These are interpreted of the seven angels who were the ministers of the Churches. They are the representatives of all who have followed them in the same sacred calling. They are all alike in the hand of Christ. He places them as He will. His providence orders all that appertains to them. His Spirit inclines them to occupy or decline the openings that are presented to them. They are where they are by His will. How should such a thought stimulate to fidelity? If I occupy my post as the minister of the Spirit, how shall I perform its duties? "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

4. This leads us appropriately to inquire what is the duty required of the ministers of the word, as it is set forth in the next expression of the text, "feed the Church of God?"

The terms at once call up the idea of the Shepherd and His flock. Nor is there any emblem of the minister so common in the Scriptures. Our Lord applied it to Himself, saying, "I am the Good Shepherd." And His apostle spoke of Him in contrast with those who serve under Him, as "the Chief Shepherd." As He is, so are they, and as He did, so should they.

What, then, is the duty of the shepherd? It is to feed the

flock. And how is that duty discharged by the minister of the word?

He discharges it in the supply of ordinances. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." These are the ordinances of His grace. They are His word, and sacraments, and prayer. In them the souls of men are nourished. It will not be possible to feed the flock if the ordinances are not scrupulously observed, and constantly administered. As continually as the thoughtful parent has his board covered with necessary food, that his household may eat and be satisfied; so must the word be presented in the ordinances of religion. Regularity and constancy are the great requisites, and without them the ministry cannot prosper. If the ordinances are not enjoyed, the people cannot be fed.

The mere ordinance, however, will not suffice. Wholesome food must be laid on the table or the family cannot be nourished. True doctrine must be placed before the soul in the ordinances or it cannot be in health and prosper. It was at the very time when the Pharisees abounded in Judea, and the professed teachers of the people were a burden in the land, that it is recorded of Christ—"when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." There may be ordinances still and no nourishment in them. The word must be presented in its purity and power. The purpose of the ministry must be, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He must be preached, in the glory of His person, the completeness of His work, the grace of His offices, the beauty of His example, and the faithfulness of His promises. Then, and not otherwise, will "the bread of life," "the living bread," be furnished in the ordinances of religion.

Thus provided, the shepherd must take care that the flock are conducted to the pasture. If left to themselves they may not come to partake. They must be visited and invited and constrained to come. One charge against the false prophets was—"ye have scattered my flock and driven them away, and have not visited them." Instead of this our Lord's command is "go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled." There must be a holy urgency that they may be brought to the rich pasture.

Especially, if any of the sheep, after having partaken of the pastures of grace have turned aside and gone to forbidden paths, they must be followed with all the shepherd's anxious care. O ! how touchingly did the Lord describe His own ministry in that tender parable—"What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." Even so must every true shepherd go after the backslider and not give over the search until he find and restore him.

And even when sinners are brought to the ordinances there is a remaining duty. The shepherd is to see that they partake. If the flock do not feed on the good pasture it is a symptom of disease. The shepherd is alarmed and uses the necessary medicine for his sheep. So must the minister of the word. He must see there is an appetite for the food he administers. And he should never be satisfied until he can say, as he looks upon them—"blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Then may it be truly said, "he hath fed the flock."

5. It only remains to notice the concluding words—"which He hath purchased with His own blood."

Amazing words ! but true. Jesus Christ was God, and His blood was the purchase of the flock. "I lay down my life for the sheep." True, the deity could not suffer nor die, but the humanity in which His deity dwelt did both, and what was done or suffered in the one nature is commonly attributed to the other. Thus understood, the statement in the text is literally true, that "God hath purchased the church with His own blood."

On this ground it is the practice in the divine word to found the most earnest appeals to the members of the church, to dedicate themselves to God. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit which are God's." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead, and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again."

There is a still more pointed application of this truth to the very case contemplated in the text when the Apostle warns the ministers of the church against tempting one another into sin on the ground that through them "the weak brother may perish, for whom Christ died." The argument is that while Christ died to save him others tempt him to fall into sin and expose him to all the evils thence resulting.

If the argument is applicable to all it is surely specially so to the ministers of the word. Shall they by their neglect or sin suffer those to be injured for whom Christ shed His blood? Can it be that with the fact before them that Christ gave up His life to redeem them, they shall leave them to perish? In this view the appeal is irresistible—"take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood."

In conclusion, there are two thoughts which it is important to have strongly impressed on our minds. They refer to the ministry and to those for whose sake it is exercised.

1. As to the ministry, how essential is its purity and fidelity. Let me ask all who sustain it to observe the view of the Apostle in his description of a godly minister in 1 Tim. iii. 2—6. The passage contains sixteen qualifications which are declared to be necessary, and of these fifteen refer to moral and religious character, while only one relates to his gifts. The gift is "apt to teach," and the personal graces are—"blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own house, not a novice." These words speak trumpet-tongued to every minister of the gospel.

2. As to those among whom the ministry is exercised. Why is all this urgency used respecting it? It is on your account. It is lest you should perish in your sins. It is that you may be saved. It is because the ministry must be to you either a blessing or a curse. O! ponder these words, "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of life unto life, and to the other of death unto death." It may well be added—"who is sufficient for these things?"

Part IV.

THE TESTIMONY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT IN
THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION;

OR,

THE FULL REVELATION OF THE DOCTRINE
OF THE SPIRIT IN THE EPISTLES TO THE
CHURCHES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I.

The Holy Ghost the Spirit of Life.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh : that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”—Rom. viii. 1-13.



Our Lord's farewell discourse to His disciples, He said, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.”

These words must have raised the expectation, that discoveries of truth, more full and satisfactory than had been given during His life, would be made after His death. Nor was it disappointed. The day of Pentecost was an earnest of the enlarged effusion of the Spirit which followed it. This was imparted in the labours and writings of the apostles, in an eminent degree. Particularly in the epistles of the New Testament and the Revelation views were opened up such as had never been enjoyed before. While these embraced all subjects appertaining to the gospel of Christ, they referred particularly to the doctrine and work of the Spirit.

And it is this enlarged testimony which we now proceed to investigate.

At the outset, however, we are met by an extreme difficulty. This arises out of the extent and variety of the subject. It would be impossible, within any reasonable bounds, to consider it in all its aspects. We must, therefore, be content with a selection of the more important views of the subject.

At the same time, there is one great facility afforded by the manner in which it is frequently presented. Groups of testimonies to the Spirit are often found together. Each of these it might be most instructive to consider. But that being impossible, it must suffice to treat them together. An example is furnished in the passage now before us. And we proceed to collect the views which it presents, following the order of the verses that have been read.

1. The distinctive character of a true believer is expressed when he is said, in the first verse, to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

A gracious and entire change has passed over him. Naturally, he "walked after the flesh." "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," is the description of an unrenewed sinner. He follows the propensities and dispositions with which he is born. Unto Adam, after his fall, were born sons "in his own likeness." They inherited his sinful nature, and pursued a course in accordance with it. Thus "the flesh" became synonymous with sinfulness, both as expressing the source whence it was derived, and the seat of its dominion. To "walk after it," is the characteristic of a sinner. This is the condition out of which he needs to be delivered. And this is the deliverance which the Spirit secures for him. He takes the place of a father toward the sinner. He imparts to him a new nature. He makes him "a new man." The language of the Scriptures is the most significant and forcible, describing the complete change of which he becomes the subject. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is the natural effect of such a change, that the sinner shall in future be "after the Spirit." He obtains the

mastery. He assumes the government of the life. The address becomes then an appropriate one, "ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of your mind, and ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Then the distinctive character becomes precisely as it is described in the text, "walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. We are next informed in the second verse, how it is that the Spirit produces this gracious change. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Two views of extreme importance are expressed in these words. The Spirit puts forth His energy as a Spirit of life, and the result of that agency is the transference of the soul from the dominion of one law to that of another directly contrary to it. Consider these thoughts.

The Spirit operates on the mind as a "Spirit of life." "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." More largely, the apostle expresses the same sentiment to the Colossians (ii. 10-13), saying, "ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him; having forgiven you all trespasses." The same power which the Spirit exerted when He raised up Christ from the dead, He puts forth upon the sinner when He raises his soul from the death of sin. He becomes to him "the Spirit of life."

Hence arises the effect ascribed to His operation. The soul is brought under the dominion of a new law. Formerly it was subject to "the law of sin and death." It was under a law which detected its sin, and denounced a sentence of death against it. That law, therefore, it feared, and hated, and disobeyed. But now it is brought under a new dominion. It becomes subject to the "law of life in Christ Jesus." Strange to say, this is the same law as before, but the relation of the sinner to it is changed.

The Spirit has united him to Christ. In Christ the law is satisfied with him. It declares him free from its condemnation. It pronounces him entitled to its reward. It becomes his friend. He, therefore, loves it, and obeys it, and delights in it. So he can say, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

3. The result of this blessed change soon becomes apparent in his habits and tastes, as these are described in the fifth verse—"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

How natural! As our Lord has expressed it, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Every creature follows its own nature. The bird flies through the air, as its native element; the fish swims in the deep waters; and the beasts seek their habitation in the deserted forests. So it is with man. The sinner walks after the course of this world. His cry is, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" He is "of the earth, earthy." He "minds earthly things." They occupy his thoughts, are the objects of his pursuit, and furnish his gratifications." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" absorb his cares. If he is refused their indulgence, he is out of his element. He is ready to say, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" How different it is with those that are after the Spirit. "They mind the things of the Spirit." His word is their guide. On all questions they turn to its testimony and ask, "How is it written?" Its authority is paramount with them. They dare not and would not gainsay it. They "tremble at the Word of God." If in anything they find a resistance in their mind to the divine testimony, they pray to God and strive with their own hearts until they are brought into submission to His will. Thus the great subjects of revelation are those which mainly engage their attention. The soul, salvation, death, judgment, and eternity are the themes that are most familiar to them. They could not and do not desire to banish them from their thoughts. They cherish them. They judge of all other things by their relation to them. They habitually contemplate time in the light of eternity. They "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal,

but the things which are not seen are eternal." "Their conversation is in heaven." And thus in their habits and tastes they exhibit that as "they who are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, so they who are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit."

4. To accomplish such a blessed result, we are next taught, in the ninth verse, that the provision of the Gospel is complete through the grace of the Spirit. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." There is great emphasis in these words, as well as fulness of meaning, as will readily appear by noticing the several expressions contained in them.

"Ye are not in the flesh." So says the inspired Apostle to all true believers. In one sense, indeed, they are still in the flesh, and have a most painful consciousness of it. They are encompassed with its infirmities and temptations, and are often constrained to cry with the Apostle, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in another sense, they "are not in the flesh." They refuse to allow it the mastery. They contend against it. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." This controversy is maintained, and wherever it is rightly conducted, the dominion of the flesh becomes weaker and weaker, and that of the Spirit stronger and stronger, even as the house of Saul and that of David. Thus true believers are "not in the flesh," as once they were, and as all unrenewed men still are.

On the contrary, it is testified they "are in the Spirit." They live in Him. The atmosphere which He creates around them is that in which they breathe most freely, enjoy most abundantly, and grow most vigorously. The views which He imparts in His Word are the most precious in their esteem. The course which He prescribes is that which it is most agreeable to them to follow. What He forbids, they hate and avoid. What He requires, they approve and do. They realise the idea that they "are in the Spirit."

It is added, for illustration and confirmation, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." It is assumed that no man can be in the Spirit unless the Spirit dwell in him. Our being in the Spirit, and the Spirit being in us, are used as convertible terms. Every representation is made that can impress the close

fellowship which must be maintained with the Spirit. How strong is the term of His "dwelling in us." Yet it is put with the greatest force and frequency in the Scriptures. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." "Ye are an habitation of God through the Spirit." The indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of believers is a constant doctrine of the Divine Word. There He is, shining with His light in the understanding, quickening the conscience by His power, shedding abroad His love in its hallowed influence, engaging all the active powers, subduing the will, and constraining the whole man to live, not to himself, but to Him that died for him and rose again. Well, therefore, may it be said to all who are thus happily influenced, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."

5. In connection with this sentiment, the absolute necessity of the indwelling of the Spirit for the accomplishment of these purposes, is most appropriately declared in the last clause of the ninth verse. "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

The name here given to the Spirit is deserving of notice—"The Spirit of Christ." Such He is in many deeply interesting and important senses. He purchased Him by His death for the benefit of His people. He bestows Him upon them as the gift of gifts. He is wholly at His disposal to dispense Him as He will. When He is given, He glorifies Christ, He conforms to Him, and He saves the soul by union with Him. With much propriety, therefore, He is denominated "the Spirit of Christ."

As such the sinner must "have Him." He must have Him as a possession which has been freely granted to Him. And he must have Him as a power which continually influences him. Unless he have Him he cannot be influenced by Him, and if he have Him it can be only for the purpose of yielding himself up to His influence.

To have Him thus is necessary to every sinner. The terms employed are designedly the most universal. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ." It matters not who or what He may be, he needs to have the Spirit. Whether he be young or old, learned or ignorant, moral or immoral, he requires this gracious agency. The youngest and most innocent cannot change his own heart without Him. The oldest and most hardened may be re-

generated by His grace. The most learned cannot discover the truth unless He teach him, and the most ignorant can be taught by Him. The most moral has no holiness that will make him meet for the kingdom of heaven, independent of the Spirit, and the most ungodly may be ripened for its purity and blessedness by Him. He, but He only, can say, "behold, I make all things new."

Of every man it must be affirmed, "if he have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." He is not in the number of His people now, and he will not be acknowledged by Him hereafter. The Spirit is as essential to sanctify, as the Son is to save. Indeed, the Son saves by the sanctification of the Spirit. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." In all its integrity the truth of the testimony before us must be acknowledged,— "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

6. Only, however, let any man have the Spirit, and he is assured of final salvation. This sentiment is very strongly asserted in the 11th verse,— "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." He consummated His work in Christ, and He will do the same in every one of His people, in whom He dwells. He formed the body of Christ, upheld Him through all His ministry, delivered Him in His agony and death, and raised Him from the grave. This is an emblem and earnest of what He will accomplish for all who have Him.

He begins His work in their regeneration. They are born of Him, and pass from death to life under His gracious influence. They become new creatures in Jesus Christ.

They are kept by Him in all their future journey. He guides them, protects them, upholds them, enables them to do and bear the will of God. He makes their path to be as that of the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

He never leaves the soul until it is conducted safe into the heavenly kingdom. "Saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Spirit abideth to preserve His own work, until "the body returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit goes to God that gave it."

Nor does His care then end. It is extended to the body deposited in the grave. He knows where the ashes of all Christ's people lie, and He will gather the precious dust in the day of the resurrection. He will quicken it anew, giving to every soul his own body. "It is sown in corruption and shall be raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour and shall be raised in glory; it is sown in weakness and shall be raised in power. This mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory." So true is the testimony,—“If the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

7. This subject is appropriately concluded by the view of the believer's duty presented in the 13th verse,—“If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live.” A most necessary duty is enjoined, and it is enforced by warning and encouragement.

The duty is to mortify the deeds of the body. This must be done where the Spirit dwells. Otherwise He will be grieved and quenched and forsake the soul. “Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry,—put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

As the duty is arduous and urgent, the arguments are weighty. We are warned, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” There will be misery here and punishment hereafter. “If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.” At the same time the encouragement is great. “If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” In the present world there shall be spiritual life in all its high attainments and rich enjoyments. The largest share of earthly happiness is that which is attached to a life of godliness. “Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” But it is in the world to come that the true idea of life shall be apprehended and realised. Then shall there be all the blessedness


which the redeemed soul is capable of enjoying. In vain we try to describe it. We can only acquiesce in the divine testimony—"In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." O ! how this presents a sinful life with its issue in the contrast—"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Only remember it is only by the Spirit this duty can be done or this blessedness obtained. It is to inculcate this lesson the subject of the Spirit is so fully developed in the Scriptures, as well as to encourage us by His sufficiency. Hence the many views that have now been presented to us. We must be "after the Spirit ;" as "the Spirit of Life," He must "set us free from the law of sin and death ;" we must "mind the things of the Spirit ;" the Spirit must "dwell in us ;" if "we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His ;" if we have, He will perfect His work in our eternal redemption. So we are bound to mortify the flesh, that we may not die in sin, but live for ever.

II.

The Holy Ghost the Spirit of Adoption.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. viii. 14—17.

" O be led by the Spirit" is expressive of yielding ourselves up entirely to Him. They who do so are led by Him as a master, whose will is their law; as a protector, in whom they fearlessly confide; and as a guide, whose directions they implicitly follow. They obey the divine injunction, "Yield yourselves unto God."

The phrase is appropriately used in this place after the view which the Apostle had given of the work of the Spirit in the preceding verses. He had described the believer as one who "walks after the Spirit; whom the Spirit of Life makes free from the law of sin and death; who minds the things of the Spirit; in whom the Spirit dwells; who has the Spirit; whose mortal body shall be quickened by the Spirit after it has lain in the grave; and who now, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, so that he shall live for ever." And then, as if he would sum up all this rich description in a single word, he says of the believer that he is "led by the Spirit of God."

Having thus described his entire subjection to the Spirit, he proceeds to set forth, in the text, the results of his influence over him. He is thus made a Son of God—he has the Spirit of a son—he enjoys a consciousness of his own sonship—and he shall have the inheritance of a son. Let us pursue these views as they are presented to us in the passage that is now before us.

1. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons

of God." It is by yielding themselves to the dominion of the Spirit they became sons.

It need scarcely be observed, this sonship is to be understood of the new creation unto righteousness, effected in the soul of the believer, by the gracious operation of the divine Spirit. It is not the relation which all men have to God, as the creatures of His power, but that which is peculiar to the believer, as "the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus." And it is largely described in the divine word as the fundamental and essential change which every sinner must undergo in order that he may inherit the kingdom of heaven.

As to its nature, it is divine and heavenly. The Apostle Peter pronounces those who have become the subjects of it, to be "partakers of the divine nature." They have "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and, being renewed in the spirit of their mind, they have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." They are made like God, as the son resembles the father. They may say, "we have the mind of Christ," who is our elder brother. They see as He saw, feel as He felt, act as He acted. Thus "are they sons of God."

As to the instrument by which such a change is effected, it is faith. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Faith and regeneration are united. Nor is it difficult to see their natural connection. It is as the truth is perceived its power is felt, and so operates to change the whole man. Sin and salvation are seen, as they are represented in the Scriptures, and when these views are received, the result is regeneration. "God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "Born, not of corruptible seed."

As to the agent by whom such a change from alienation to sonship is effected, it is the Spirit of God. How forcibly was this doctrine inculcated by our Lord on Nicodemus? "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Not merely does He declare it, but condescends to argue it. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." It is impossible, in the nature of

the case, that a sinful man can effect a gracious change in his own soul. It is a work above nature. God alone can accomplish it, and it is the special work which His Spirit has undertaken. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." But how is this promise made good? It is added, "I will put My Spirit upon you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them."

It is thus the family of God is constituted on the earth. Sinners are made sons, through faith, by the agency of the Spirit. Then and thus they are adopted. They pass out of the world lying in wickedness, into the church of the living God. They are "translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." They have been addressed, and yielded to the call, "come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

2. Having been thus made sons, they have the spirit of sons. It is therefore added in the text—"for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is taken for granted that as soon as the condition of sonship is produced, its spirit is imbibed. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The words are most expressive of the wretched spirit that cleaves to the unregenerated soul, and, in contrast, of the joyous spirit of the believer. Consider these.

The sinner is supposed to be enslaved by a spirit of bondage and fear. Nor can any representation be more just. Under whatever aspect he is viewed, this spirit will be found cleaving to him. He appears under many varieties of condition, but this peculiarity clings to them all.

Take the most depraved and guilty of the sons of men. They are given up to the indulgence of the worst passions, and the vilest practices. Yet there are times when the thought of God obtrudes itself upon them. It is not a welcome visitant, but they cannot always exclude it. And how does it affect them? Invariably with terror. They fear the God whom they hate.

They say, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Yet in spite of them, thoughts of His holiness and judgment rise up to their imagination. And they are like the hand-writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace, terrifying them by the fearful warning—"thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

Nor is it the depraved only who suffer this spirit of bondage. It is found in many of the most respectable members of society. They have the form of religion, but not the power. They are formalists. They dare not disregard the claims of religion, nor do they neglect its outward observances. They bow the knee in prayer. They are found in the courts of the Lord's house. But in these exercises, what is their spirit? They feel them to be a drudgery. The heart is not in them. They would avoid them if they were not afraid. Of such Jesus says, "This people draweth nigh to me with the mouth, and honoureth me with the lip, but their heart is far from me."

There are others who go farther in this spirit. They are superstitious. They live in such terror of God that they are ever seeking to recommend themselves to Him by the utmost austerities. They subject themselves to penances or pilgrimages. They torture the body in the vain hope of benefiting the soul. "Through fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Alas ! it must be added there is another class who are in the same unhappy condition. The awakened sinner is apt to be ensnared by it. He must think of God, but it is with terror he does so. He desires to have His favour, but he despairs of finding it. He cannot repress his concern, but he does not see how his anxieties are to be allayed. He too is yet under a spirit of bondage.

In contrast to these and many other forms of the same unhappy spirit, contemplate the privileges of the sons of God in the enjoyment of the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

It is said, slaves were not allowed to call their master, in ancient times, by the name "Abba." When they addressed him it must be by another term. To use it was the privilege of free-men or children only. And so it is supposed the Apostle alludes to this custom in the description before us. It does not belong to the unregenerated to approach God with "Abba, Father."

This is the privilege of those only who have believed to the saving of the soul, and who through grace have become sons of God. And it is instructive and interesting to observe how they enter into the enjoyment of it.

It arises naturally out of the views which they have been led to entertain of God. They have been enlightened to see Him "in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses." Their fears are thus dissipated. They see Him farther delighting, for Christ's sake, to confer the highest blessings on those for whom He died, and who are willing to accept them through Him. Thus they are impelled to say, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Nay more, they see in God not merely what calls forth their gratitude, but engages their love. They are constrained to say, "we love Him because he first loved us." Of all beings He is the only one in whom they can repose with entire confidence. They hear Him saying, "acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace." They can say, "they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." They acquiesce in the gracious proclamation that "God is love." Thus they are delivered from the spirit of bondage, and animated with the spirit of adoption.

Once produced by their being enlightened to know God, this happy spirit is cherished by its constant exercise. It is strengthened by habit. The more it is indulged, the greater is the encouragement given to it. It learns to say with the clear and satisfying views of the apostle, "seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Even more strongly it is the privilege of such a spirit to say, "having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say His flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart

sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." What precious comments are these on the words of the apostle, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Nor is this all. We proceed to notice—

3. The believer has a sweet consciousness of his own sonship. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

From the manner in which these words are added to the former, it is clearly assumed that the spirit of adoption is naturally accompanied by a consciousness of its existence. It is what in ordinary cases is to be expected. And if in any instance it is found to be otherwise, there must be some derangement, through our sin, in the process of the Spirit's work, which ought carefully to be inquired into, and rectified. In the words before us this process is well described, and it is two-fold. Let us examine it for a little.

There is first supposed to be the witness of our own spirit. What can this be but the consciousness of what takes place in our own minds? Such consciousness is reasonably to be expected. It is assumed by our Lord in two questions which He put to different persons. To one He said, "dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And to another, "lovest thou me?" He desired an answer, but this could be furnished only by our being conscious of the existence of love and faith in our own minds. That we may be so is indeed distinctly affirmed by an inspired apostle, saying, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." And why should he not? Faith is not an unsubstantial imagination, but a blessed reality. Its own exercises are very distinct. It brings the sinner to the Saviour, and unites him with Him. Its effects are such as clearly to proclaim its existence. They are, deep humiliation for sin, trust in Christ, the love and practice of holiness. To confine our attention to the view of the text, regeneration accompanies it. This is the translation of the soul from the darkness of nature to the light of the gospel, from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. Surely these are palpable realities of which the soul may and ought to be conscious, if they exist within it. Adoption is represented to be attended by the spirit of adoption. So soon as we become sons we are supposed to cry to God, in the spirit of

sons, "Abba, Father." Therefore the apostle takes for granted that our own spirit bears witness to our reception into the family of God.

But it is also helped by another spirit, and that is no other than the Spirit of God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is a part of His office to give satisfaction to the mind of a believer respecting His own gracious state. And how does He execute this office? Not by any mysterious and inexplicable impression which He makes upon the mind. It is simply by rendering His own work distinct and apparent. He so shines into the mind as to fill it with light. He so impresses the heart as to captivate it with love. He so constrains the affections as to engage them with God, and Christ, and divine things. He so governs the will as to make it submissive to God. He so regulates the desires as to make the conduct holy. He so unfolds eternity as to animate with hope. In a word, He makes the soul to be a partaker of a new life, of which it may be as conscious as it is of its own existence. Thus "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

What, then, is the duty of those who do not enjoy this testimony? Surely to inquire, first, whether they are the children of God. They may not have the spirit of adoption because they are not sons. Or it may be, that though they are sons, there is some impediment by which they are deprived of the consciousness of it. Then their duty is to inquire what it is, and remove it. It may be some erroneous view or inconsistent practice. God forbids the enjoyment in such a case, that we may be warned to examine it. If a piece of machinery is not accomplishing its work, it is carefully examined. Some valve may be found closed, or some passage choked, or some derangement gradually introduced, and this must be rectified before it will work pleasantly or efficiently. So also may it be with the soul. "Examine me, and prove me, O Lord; try my reins and my heart." "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Thus let us deal with ourselves until we attain to the consciousness of adoption, and are enabled to say, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the chil-

dren of God." Surely the interests we have at stake demand so much, as shall now more fully appear, while we consider—

4. The inheritance reserved for the sons of God. "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Every word is deeply significant and suggestive.

"Heirs." The inheritance of the children of God is not here. It is true, they have even in this life the largest share of enjoyment. They bear its ills better than others, and they have sources of enjoyment peculiar to themselves. It is of present privileges it is said, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love Him. But He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Still it must be added, "now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face ; now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

"Heirs of God." "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." How satisfying ! Here the believer begins to partake of God, but hereafter he shall do so fully. He will drink out of the fountain of infinite wisdom, almighty power, perfect holiness, and unfailing faithfulness. He shall have whatever God can confer upon him, in harmony with this redeemed nature. He shall enjoy God Himself.

"Joint-heirs with Christ." Being united with Christ, His title to glory is theirs. They shall appear in heaven on the very same foundation. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." They shall have the same enjoyments with Him. Their tastes and desires are the same. "They shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

"If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." We may suffer as He did, and if so, it will only be to heighten the future joy. Sweet is pleasure after pain. Sweet is rest that follows toil. No doubt, trials are appointed here to heighten and endear the blessedness of heaven. It is the tempestuous voyage that makes the safety of the peaceful haven precious. "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel ; wherein I

suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds—I endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying; for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.”

O! let us see that we are the sons of God, born of the Spirit, and received into the family of God. Let us cherish the spirit of sons—not oppressed by a spirit of bondage and fear, but freely breathing the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. Let us not rest without the consciousness of it—the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And let us wait for our inheritance, a share in the glory of Christ.

III.

The Holy Ghost the Spirit of Prayer.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—ROM. viii. 26, 27.



THE subject of prayer is one of universal interest and great importance. Wherever men have been found the practice has prevailed, however it might be perverted by ignorance or superstition. It is natural to man. It is the cry of helplessness and suffering to a Being able to uphold and deliver. None can restrain themselves from uttering its entreaties when they feel their necessities. As might be expected, therefore, prayer has a large place in the Scriptures. They recite constant examples of its practice and prevalence. They deliver abundant instructions on its nature and obligations. They provide for its observance in all the relations of life, private, social, and public. In this matter, as in all others, the revelations of Scripture are in complete accordance with the desires and necessities of human nature. At present, however, it is especially seasonable to observe the connection of prayer with the work of the Spirit. The right observance of it is ascribed entirely to His influence. Not merely does He instruct us in the nature, and claims, and advantages of the duty, but He alone can enable us rightly to perform it. The text is an illustrative example, entering largely into the whole subject. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Without going beyond these words, we learn that it is the office of the Spirit to teach us what we are to pray for, to enable us to pray aright, and to encourage us in the duty until we obtain that for which we pray. Let us try to enter into these views of the exercise of prayer.

1. The Spirit instructs us in the matter of our prayers. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

No delineation could be more just than that which is here given of the condition of men generally in relation to the exercise of prayer. Tell them to pray, and almost universally they will plead they cannot do it. They can converse with you on the subject of religion. They can contend for the special views which they have been led to entertain respecting it. They can defend the practices which they have adopted. But ask them to bow down and offer a prayer to God for you and for themselves, and they will say they cannot do it. Their thoughts desert them when they attempt it. Language fails them, and they assume that cannot be a duty, imperatively required of them, which they feel they are wholly incompetent to perform.

It is this incapacity for prayer that furnishes the most satisfactory explanation of the universal prevalence of forms of prayer. On the one hand, men cannot live without it. They know there is a great Judge to whom they must account. They feel they are dependent on His favour and goodness. They fear to offend Him. They need His blessing. Therefore they must acknowledge Him, and wait upon Him, and worship Him, and pray to Him. But, on the other hand, with all this urgency upon their minds, they do not feel at liberty to come freely into the divine presence, and to express fully the thoughts and desires of their hearts before Him. The consequence is, they compromise the matter by betaking themselves to forms of prayer which others have prepared for their use. By the repetition of these, they satisfy themselves with the outward observance of a duty, in which the true spirit of the exercise may never be found. They come under the inspired description of those whom the Apostle delineates as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

Let it not be supposed the use of forms of prayer is condemned in these remarks, as if it were impossible to enter into

the spirit of them. They may be employed as aids to devotion, and we may really breathe the spirit of their aspirations. How many, for example, are accustomed thus to use the Lord's prayer. But while this is freely conceded, it is obvious that forms of prayer have arisen mainly from the felt incapacity of men to pray, while yet they must satisfy conscience by some outward observance. In the hands of many such, the exercise has consisted in what our Lord denominates "vain repetitions." He, therefore, warns men against it, and says, "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets; but when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them."

This being the condition of mankind, how necessary is the work of the Spirit that they may understand the true nature of prayer and be qualified to practise it? They need to say to Him, as our Lord's disciples said to their Master, "Lord, teach us to pray." Blessed be His name, this is a work which He has specially undertaken to accomplish. And it is distinctly promised in the words before us, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." The necessity of men is made the reason of His gracious interference. He helpeth because we know not what to pray for. What we cannot otherwise do, He will enable us to do, and He will do it out of compassion to our infirmities.

How, then, does He accomplish this blessed work? It is simply by touching the heart of the sinner. If men cannot pray, it is because their hearts are blinded and hardened. The Spirit, knowing it is so, shines into the blinded mind and quickens the dead soul. Discoveries are then made that appal the stoutest heart. The chambers of imagery are laid open, and the man is horrified at himself. He sees his own corruptions and dangers. Convinced of sin, he can no longer be silent. He calls upon God, for he knows the help of man is vain. He can enter into the spirit of David when he said, "out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." As before he could not pray, now he cannot restrain prayer. Could the man who felt himself sinking in the deep waters refrain from crying out for de-

liverance? No more could the sinner, enlightened and quickened by the Spirit to see and feel his sin and danger, restrain the prayer that bursts from his heart to the God of salvation.

Behold the example of the Apostle Paul. He left his home at Jerusalem to go to Damascus, "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples." As he proceeded in his journey, and had nearly terminated it, "a light shone upon him from heaven, and a voice was heard by him, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" His reply was, "who art thou, Lord?" Presently we hear him asking, "what wilt thou have me to do?" And when Ananias is sent to instruct him he is pointed out to him by this characteristic mark, "behold he prayeth." In that remark it is assumed this was a new feature in his character. He had never prayed before. Yet here is a man who had been trained in forms of prayer from his childhood. "He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel." He belonged to the strictest sect of the Jews, and was known as a devout and distinguished Pharisee. All the ceremonies of Judaism were well known and diligently observed by him. He made long prayers. Yet, we are given to understand, that up till this period, when Christ visited him by the grace of His Spirit, he had never prayed.

Herein we see the secret of prayer. The heart must be touched. It must be convinced of sin. Till then it knows not what to pray for. Then it cannot restrain prayer. Its wants are spread out before God. Its desires are lifted up to Him. The mouth is filled with arguments, pleading with God. And so an essential and invariable evidence of conversion is the same still as it was in Paul. Of every one whose heart the Spirit has touched as he did his, it may be said—"behold he prayeth."

Nor let it be supposed this is true of the believer only at the time of his conversion. He is dependent on the help of the Spirit throughout the whole course of the divine life. Infirmities cleave to him to the end, and so long he needs the Spirit's teaching. The text refers mainly to the case of those who are exercised in godliness. Alas! how little we know of ourselves at the best. The church at Laodicea had the reputation of great enlightenment and advancement, yet Christ thus addresses it from His seat in glory—"thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and

naked ; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed ; and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Such counsels are needed still. How ignorant may the most enlightened be of the sins that still cleave to them, the dangers that beset them, the temptations that encompass them, and the duties that devolve upon them ? At every stage in our progress we need to be thoughtful, watchful, and prayerful. No step should be taken in life without lifting up the heart to God for grace and guidance. It is thus we shall be enabled to "walk circumspectly." We have reason to be thankful we have an unerring director who is ever ready to hear and answer our prayer. Quick as thought we may look to Him in every emergency, and as speedily He can fulfil the promise, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go ; I will guide thee with mine eye." When He does so we realize the promise of the text—"the Spirit helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

2. The Spirit enables us to pray aright. While He instructs us in the matter of prayer by imparting to us a knowledge of ourselves and our sins and dangers and duties, he infuses a right spirit into our prayers. And this is manifestly the idea of the Apostle when he says—"the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The terms are extremely forcible and suggestive and demand a careful consideration.

They assume the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the believer. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "Ye are an habitation of God through the Spirit." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." All these passages proceed on the assumption that the Spirit of God has taken up His dwelling in every heart that has been renewed by His grace, and abideth there continually. "We know that He abideth in us by the Spirit that He hath given us." This thought is full of interest, and ought deeply to impress and influence us.

It reminds us farther that in every thing we do, and especially in every prayer we offer, we ought to be under the immediate

power and grace of the Spirit. At first sight it would seem as if the Apostle represented our prayers to be more the dictates of the Spirit than our own desires. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." It is plain, however, this cannot be his meaning. He expresses strongly that what we ask must be the suggestions of the Spirit to our minds. He makes such discoveries as enable us to know what to ask for, and He presents them in a light of so much value and importance as excites us to ask them in a becoming spirit. There is a concurrence of our sentiments and desires and feelings in those of the Spirit, and we pray accordingly.

As to the prayers themselves they are called intercessions. And the term is most significant of their nature. It is expressive of the conduct of an advocate in a court of justice. As he helps his client, so does the Spirit help the suppliant. He thinks, and speaks, and argues, and acts for him. He exhibits prayer as a pleading with God, to which the Spirit prompts, and in which He sustains him. Nothing will satisfy the advocate but the gaining of his cause. So the prayer that proceeds from the influence of the Spirit will never rest short of a favourable answer. It is not offered for its own sake, but for the sake of that which it seeks. It is a hand stretched out to God, and which will not be withdrawn until the desired boon is placed within it.

Hence we see the propriety of the words that are added, "with groanings which cannot be uttered." Words are faint signs of the desires of a true suppliant. The agony of the heart is beyond the cogency of its language. It may betimes be such as to stifle expression. The thought may be too big for utterance. We can be at no loss, therefore, to see what must be the characteristics of all prayer that proceeds from the Spirit within us.

It must be sincere. We do not then ask what is not in reality desired. There may be such prayer, but it is a mockery of God and an abomination in his sight. We need to remember the exhortation of Solomon,—*"keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."*

It must be earnest. If it be of the Spirit it will take no denial. The heart is set upon it. The mouth will be filled with arguments. Whatever regards our own interests, and the good of others, and

the glory of God will be pleaded with Him. The heart is poured out before Him.

It must be believing. This is implied in the idea of intercession. That goes on the principle of confidence in God and in His word. He is able to grant our requests, and He is willing to do as He has said. His perfections are appealed to, that they may be exercised on our behalf. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

It must be importunate. The answer may be deferred, but it will be waited for. The times and ways are with God, but in due season we know "we shall reap if we faint not." We remember the woman of Canaan, and how, after many repulses, our Lord said, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And we cannot forget how He has said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Of such prayer the Scriptures record many examples. So prayed Jacob, when, wrestling all night with the angel, he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And he was blessed. So prayed Moses, when he cried for Israel, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book of thy remembrance." He was not blotted out, but Israel was pardoned. So prayed Joshua when he pleaded, "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth her backs before their enemies, and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" So prayed the early church, when they continued in prayer and supplication till the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. So prayed they again, till "the place was shaken where they were assembled." So prayed they till Peter was released from prison. Then, truly, "the Spirit itself made intercession with groanings which could not be uttered."

3. The reason is added in the text why we are encouraged to pray until we gain the object of our supplication. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."

In all that has been said, it has been taken for granted that our prayers have been in accordance with the revealed will of God. And here we are taught it is part of the Spirit's office to render them so. For this the provision which He has made is complete.

As the basis of all, He has plainly declared what the mind of God is, in His word. Its testimony is complete. It teaches us all we need to know. On every question that concerns salvation, it pours a flood of light. We can therefore come into the presence of God, and lay His own word before Him as the ground and guide of our appeal to Him.

Not only so, the Spirit brings our minds into accordance with the revealed mind of God. One of His first lessons is a supreme regard to its authority. We would not ask what it does not promise. But in a mind under His influence, there is not a desire to ask any thing beyond the written word. It contains every thing that is needed or sought. Grant what is promised here, and we wish for no more. Within that divine record we find every thing we long for, as well in time as in eternity.


To complete all, the Spirit opens the apprehensions of the suppliant to discern the arguments with which he is furnished in the word. As this is done his prayers rise in sincerity, and earnestness, and faith, and importunity. "He stirreth himself up to take hold of God." Like Abraham, he becomes "strong in faith, giving glory to God, being persuaded that what He has promised He is able to perform." He knows and is animated by the assurance that He who "searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, and that He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

In conclusion, let us learn to say with the apostle, "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." The mind must be filled with light and grace, or the exercise is not prayer in the sight of God. It cannot profit. It will not be accepted. It is sinful in God's sight, and will be visited with His displeasure. On the contrary, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It avails for his own salvation and the salvation of others. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

IV.

The Teaching of the Holy Spirit.

"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet He himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."—1 Cor. ii. 4-16.

"LL thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Of this promise by the Prophet Isaiah, we have an illustration and confirmation in the words of the Apostle Paul now before us. To "be taught of the Lord" is to be understood of the illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit. Christ says of Him, "He shall teach you all things." And His Apostle here explains the nature of his instructions. Let us inquire what are its distinguishing features.

In selecting the passage that has been read, it is not with a view to offer any exposition of it. Our attention shall be confined to a single view of it—its representation of the work of the Spirit in the enlightenment of the sinner's mind. The Apostle

tells us of his preaching ; in its subject—"the testimony of God, Christ and Him crucified ; the manner of it—"not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, not with enticing words of man's wisdom ; his purpose—"not to know anything" but the doctrine of the cross among those whom he addressed ; his object—"that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." But into none of these topics do we at present enter. We shall endeavour to collect his instructions on the one theme of the Spirit's teaching, observing the features by which he tells us it was distinguished. These are various, and in examining them we shall simply follow the order of the passage itself. May we, while we do so, enjoy the teaching of which it is our aim to offer an explanation.

1. The first expression by which our attention is arrested is in the fourth verse—"the demonstration of the Spirit." How are we to understand it ?

From the connection in which it occurs, it is clear it is to be interpreted, not so much of the truth itself as of the perception of the truth. No doubt, the Spirit has given demonstration of the truth of the Gospel. He has done so by evidences external and internal. By prophecy and miracles, and the excellence, and purity, and effects of what He has taught, He has proved its truth. We can fully sympathise with the evangelist Luke when he says, in opening his Gospel, "Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." But it is not this certainty of the truth itself of which the Apostle here writes. It is the full conviction which he, who has been taught of the Spirit, possesses of his own certain knowledge of the truth. This is manifest from his whole discourse. For he treats not so much of what he had taught, precious as he declared that to be, as of the gracious privilege conferred upon the Corinthians in having their minds enlightened to apprehend his instructions.

Such a view of the Christian privilege is in full harmony with the uniform representation of the New Testament. In writing to Timothy, Paul tells him of certain persons whom he describes as "ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is probable they complimented themselves on this state of mind. They ascribed it to their candour and humility. They were always open to conviction, and ready to

receive whatever new discoveries might be made to them. Thus they were kept ever vacillating between conflicting views. They were never certain that they had discovered the undoubted truth. What they held to-day they might abandon to-morrow. And their life might be spent and concluded in doubt and hesitation.

This is not the way of those who are taught of the Spirit. It is sufficient to observe that the Apostle cites the instance of such persons for the very purpose of condemning them. He adds immediately respecting them, "these resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate, (or, as it is rendered in the margin, "of no judgment,") concerning the faith." How different is the testimony of the Apostle John, "we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him—ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things." And these declarations are in exact accordance with what Paul denominates "the demonstration of the Spirit."

He seems to use this term designedly. It is expressive of the highest form of certainty. There can be no doubt about a proposition which has been demonstrated to be true. Men do not longer argue or contend respecting it. It is admitted. It cannot be gainsayed. There can be only one conclusion concerning it. Is it not, then, deeply impressive to find this is the term which the Apostle employs to designate the assurance which the believer has of the truth? He takes for granted that his conviction has all the certainty of a demonstration. He has no doubt or hesitancy. He is satisfied.

It will not be supposed this certainty applies to everything within the whole circle of Christian truth. There may be many things about which there may be diversities of opinion among those who are taught of God. Of all such the Apostle says, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." But there are certain great fundamental principles, essential to the truth, which must be known and received by all. The evil of sin, the depravity of the sinner, the divine sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fulness and freeness of His salvation, the grace of His Spirit, and the obligations of holiness, are known and confessed of all who are taught of God. In the reception of these truths it may be said of all believers—"by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink

into one Spirit." They are as sure as any demonstration could make them.

This is a great privilege, but it is a trying test. How blessed to have our minds at rest—to be able to say, "we who have believed do enter into rest." But have we not attained to this rest? Then let us be led to consider whether we "yet know anything as we ought to know." One thing is certain—the Apostle speaks of "the demonstration of the Spirit." And how it is attained will now appear while we proceed to a second observation on the passage before us.

2. The next feature of the Spirit's teaching, noticed by the Apostle, is its power. He speaks in the 4th verse of "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and again in the 5th, "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He assumes that "the demonstration of the Spirit" becomes a reality to our minds when the truth is applied to them by His divine power.

This is the sentiment to which he gives expression in another part of this Epistle, saying, "we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." More directly and fully he says to the Thessalonians, in the same spirit, "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Here is the entire sentiment which we are seeking to enforce, that when the gospel is brought home to any soul with power, through the agency of the divine Spirit, there is assurance—assurance of its truth and of our perception of the truth. We know the truth by the experience of its power.

Nothing can be more simple or reasonable than this principle. We are continually acting upon it in all the affairs of life. We return to the food which we have found to be nutritive and strengthening. The husbandman repeats the process which he has proved to be remunerative and successful. We cast ourselves anew upon the friendship which we have before experienced. In like manner the truth of the gospel is brought to the test of experience. We are sure of the truth because we have felt its power and yielded to its influence.

Let us take for example the doctrine of original sin. There can be no doubt it is testified in the divine word. "It is written

there is none righteous, no, not one—they are all gone out of the way—there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Still, plain as this testimony is, many dispute it. Nor are they to be silenced by argument. It is hard to convince a man against his will. But suppose the doctrine to be brought home to that proud opponent by the power of the Spirit. Suppose him enlightened to see his own depravity. His experience accomplishes what argument could not. He sees himself and stands aghast at the discovery. He is humbled to the dust. He smites on his breast, like another Publican, and cries, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The doctrine of original sin is no longer a dogma for debate, but a fact about which there can be no question with him.

Or take the doctrine of the deity of Christ. It need not be said how full is the divine testimony to its truth. The names of God are given to Him, the perfections of God are ascribed to Him, the works of God are attributed to Him, and the worship of God is rendered to Him. Yet many do not receive it. There are difficulties about the question which they cannot surmount. Let these persons, however, be of those who are convinced of sin. Let them be enlightened to know themselves and their necessities. They will be forced to acknowledge no one can meet their case but an Almighty Saviour. In that state of mind let them hear a voice proclaiming from the cross—“look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and beside me there is no Saviour.” Let them acquiesce in the invitation. Let them believe and be saved. How speedily will they then acknowledge—“without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” They will soon learn to say, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,”—“I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” This experience puts an end to all controversy. He has felt the power of the doctrine and this is to him a demonstration of its truth.

The same test may be applied to the duties of the word as well as its doctrines. Suppose we take the injunction of the Apostle John, “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.” It is hard to renounce our grasp of the

world. We still think there must be something in "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Let us then try the effect of obedience to the divine counsel. Solomon tried both ways. He served the world, and he renounced it. And what was his experience? On the world he wrote the libel, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit." And on the service of God he inscribed, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." He sums up all in one grand lesson, "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man."

Be assured this is sound doctrine. And a happy thing it is that it can be tested by experience. Christ has said, "if any man shall do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Our wisdom is, to take the divine word, and yield ourselves up implicitly to its authority. Whatever it teaches, let us believe; whatever it forbids, let us avoid; whatever it requires, let us do; whatever it appoints let us observe. In our obedience to it, we shall prove at once its truth and wisdom and grace. We shall learn to say with David, "how sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Or with Christ, "If any man shall do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." This thought, however, will come out more fully in the next feature of the Spirit's teaching, to which your attention is now solicited.

3. The Spirit's teaching is accompanied by the utmost satisfaction. This idea is largely set forth by the apostle at the 9th verse, and is expounded on to the 13th. "It is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." What can these things be! The eye has looked on many a beautiful colour and lovely scene; the ear has heard many a sweet and melodious sound; the heart has conceived many a noble and exalted thought; but eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for them that love Him? What things are meant? The present privileges of believers. This is plain from the following verse, "but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is affirmed, "He hath revealed them;" and this is confirmed by the assurance that such a revelation is in full har-

mony with the Spirit's office, which is to make known "the deep things" of God. They are made known, not only in the page of revelation, but to the minds of those who are enabled by Him to see into its meaning. Our Lord has said, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Paul said of Moses, "he endured, as seeing Him that is invisible." The Psalmist said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." So the enlightened soul sees by faith what others do not discern, he hears what never catches the ears of others, and his heart is the seat of emotions that are unknown to the unconverted. He lives in a new world, and its glories are known only to them that believe. Nor is there any thing unreasonable in this. The apostle argues for it in the next verse, saying, "for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." He knows them, and He makes them known to us. This is plainly affirmed in the words that follow, "now we have received not the spirit of the world; but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God." Still he keeps up the past tense, "we have received," "the things that are freely given to us of God." These things can be none other than the knowledge of His Son and His salvation, and our personal interest in them, and enjoyment of them. And these he concludes by saying, are the subjects of apostolic testimony now, and of all holy Scripture—"which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

Is it not clear the apostle feels he is uttering truths which can be apprehended only by those who have embraced them? But is it not equally clear that he assumes they are to all such a source of the purest and highest satisfaction? They have "a joy with which the stranger does not intermeddle." They have "fellowship with the Father and the Son," and as that is maintained "their joy is full."

4. This satisfaction is followed by a solemn warning, and a gracious encouragement. The apostle reminds us on the one hand that if we are to possess it, the teaching of the Spirit is essential, and on the other that if we are blessed with it, it shall prove to

be effectual. Let us enter into his views on these two sides of the question.

First, the divine teaching is essential. He warns us in the 14th verse, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Do not these words confirm the interpretation which we have all along adopted, that the apostle treats in this passage not merely of the truth, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, but as it is discerned there by us? We are dependent on the Spirit for the latter, no less than for the former. It is supposed the truth may be clearly revealed in the word, yet not apprehended. Nothing can exceed the force of the terms employed to prove that without the light of the Spirit we shall not perceive the truth that is revealed. This sentiment is expressed in four different forms, every one stronger than the previous one. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The fact is so, that no man left to himself will discern truth. "They are foolishness unto him." Not only will he fail to discern the truth, but he will esteem it folly. "Neither can he know them." Considering his moral blindness, and obliquity, and insensibility, it is impossible he can overcome them and arrive at the truth. Can the blind man see? Or the deaf man hear? Or the dead man feel? "They are spiritually discerned." The truth of the gospel becomes patent only when the Spirit of God gives the taste that relishes it. I appeal to all who respect the authority of the divine word, whether it would be possible more plainly or powerfully to declare the necessity of the Spirit's teaching, that we may discover the truth in the divine word?

Yet again, see, on the other hand, how effectual the teaching of the Spirit is pronounced to be. This, also, is testified by an accumulation of thought and illustration well deserving our marked observation.

"He that is spiritual judgeth all things." A man of a spiritual taste forms a correct judgment of all divine truths. A sound heart makes a clear understanding. The right moral produces the right intellectual. As a man has a taste for any science or art, he learns it with ease and speed, as philosophy, or music, or any form of handicraft. So it is with higher things. When the Spirit influences the mind and gives it a right desire, it serves as a new sense by which he judges correctly of all things.

“Yet He himself is judged of no man.” Men may not understand him. They may think him presumptuous, and obstinate, and self-willed. But this does not move him. He can say, “It is a small matter to be judged of you or of man’s judgment.” His dependence on God is the exact measure of his independence of men. He is constrained to say, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?” This is His demand of all who judge him. And while He is conscious that the Spirit is his teacher, He cannot yield to the false judgments of men.

“We have the mind of Christ.” Blessed attainment! The man who is taught by the Spirit, and in the very measure in which he is so taught, sees as Christ sees, feels as He feels, acts as He acted, judges as He judged, and desires as He desired.

Let these warnings and encouragements have their due influence upon us. Their proper effect is to produce the spirit and practice of David when he said, with the Divine Word in his hand, “Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” Let us read the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully. Let us recognize the Spirit as at once their author and interpreter. Then shall we have reason to say, “We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Believers the Temple of the Holy Ghost.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—1 Cor. iii. 16—17.



THE ancient temple was an object of great interest to the early Christian Church. To the Jews it possessed an interest amounting to the most profound veneration. Every thing connected with it was sacred in their esteem. The Gentile converts sympathized largely with them in the same views and feelings. They had embraced the ancient Scriptures in common with the Jews. They were now united in one Church. In all that related to the interests of the Gospel they had a fellow-feeling. It might therefore be expected the Apostles would employ many illustrations, drawn from the temple service, in addressing a society, like the Church at Corinth, composed of both Jewish and Gentile converts. And in the text we are presented with an example. Knowing how deeply they were all concerned in the temple and its former noble services, assured they would participate in such language as had been employed in one of the Psalms, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness—Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King, God is known in her palaces for a refuge,"—founding his illustration on such deep and tender associations the Apostle says to the members of the Church at Corinth, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Let us then inquire in what sense believers may be called the temple of God.

There are three principal ideas in the figure. True Christians

are the temple of God, built, inhabited, and purified by His Spirit. We shall enter somewhat into these thoughts. And oh ! that while we do so the Spirit of whom we speak, may occupy our hearts.

1. The Church is a temple of God, built by the Spirit.

This is a favourite illustration in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. They are thus united in one passage by the Apostle Peter, when treating of Christ he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." Christ, the foundation, is a living stone ; believers, the superstructure, are living stones built up upon Him. Christ is a stone, possessing its strength and solidity and endurance. But He is a living stone, having life in Himself and imparting it to all who are brought into contact with Him. As water issued from the rock of Horeb, when smitten by the rod of Moses, and was life to the hosts of Israel, so it is expressly written, "They drank of that spiritual rock, that followed them ; and that rock was Christ." Here, then, is the work of the Spirit, to unite sinners with the Saviour, so that by their connection with this living stone they shall become living stones, and be built up into the temple of the Lord. Let us consider the process by which this work is accomplished.

The Spirit finds the stones of this building in the rude quarry of the world. The natural rock is rugged and unsightly. It is an emblem of the human heart in its native condition. The Prophet Ezekiel expressly describes it as hard and stony. It resists every impression that is sought to be made upon it, either by the law of God, or by His love. It would remain for ever as it is, hardened in iniquity, and encrusted by the atmosphere of worldliness and sin.

From such materials the Spirit forms the stones that build the temple of the Lord. A violent shock is usually needed to dislodge them from their native bed of earthliness. Hence, in conversion, severe dispensations are often employed to arrest and awaken the mind. Sickness, or sorrow, or adversity, may be

necessary to arouse attention to divine things. Thus moved out of its original deadness, the heavenly builder exercises His power and skill on the hard and stony heart. He reduces it to order, and removes its excrescences, and polishes its roughness. This is the very idea of the psalmist, when he prays that the daughters of Israel may be "as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Thus the stones of the spiritual building are prepared for their place in the temple of the Lord.

So prepared, every one is placed in the situation he is destined to occupy. The divine architect has suited every one to his position. He knows his weakness or strength, his endurance or fickleness, and disposes him accordingly. He qualifies him for it. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." These extraordinary gifts were imparted because they were then required by the circumstances of the Church. And they are at once the evidence and proof that nothing will be withheld that is necessary to its well-being in any age or circumstances. The stones of the building shall ever be adapted to the place they are to fill, the weight they must sustain, or the strain they are to bear.

Nor is this all. While each is in its own place, and fitted to it, all are united in one solid and compact building. This is a sentiment much dwelt upon and commended in the history of the early Church. Jews and Gentiles had their several prejudices and peculiarities, and it was hard to unite them. The necessity of union was much enforced, and it was counted a great triumph of grace when it was accomplished. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Speaking of the two great sections of the Church, it is said, "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." And their common privileges are described, "through Him we both have

access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, then, ye are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." All are united to Christ, and so to one another. Their hearts are joined in love, and their hands in labour, as the corner stone binds together the parts of the building. Thus they strengthen one another.

To erect this temple on the earth is the great work of the Spirit of God. From age to age He carries it forward, and He shall continue to do so until it is completed. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ—growing up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." This precious statement is to be understood alike of the Spirit's work in every individual member of the Church, and in the whole united Church. Every member is built up in faith and holiness. Grace is given to him equal to his day and duty. He is made to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." At the same time another process is carried forward, in the addition of member to member, of stone to stone, in the divine structure. The Spirit, in the exercise of His providence and grace, is ever accomplishing the divine purpose of building up the temple of the Lord. So shall He continue to do until the words of the prophet shall have the fullest and best accomplishment, of which the second temple at Jerusalem was but an emblem, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts—He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it." This done, the great work for which this world was constructed, shall be finished. It has served as a scaffolding for the erection of the Church. The temple being completed, the scaffolding shall be taken down, and it shall stand a monument of the grace of God for ever, bearing on its front the inscription, "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men."

2. The Church is a temple inhabited by the Spirit.

Of this gracious truth the ancient Church had a visible representation in the Shechinah ; the cloud that rested on the mercy seat as a token of the divine presence. The inspired account is full of instruction and interest. "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." More briefly it is said in another place, "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." It was so at first in the tabernacle, and subsequently and permanently in the temple. And this arrangement was adopted to impress the children of Israel with a sense of God's presence in the midst of them.

We know from the history how this assurance of the divine presence was understood, and turned to profit by them. In all their perplexities they came to the Shechinah for direction and help. The prayer of the Psalmist well expressed the national spirit, "give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock ; Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth ; before Ephraim, and Manasseh, and Benjamin, stir up Thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." There lay all their strength, thence was derived all their wisdom, and that was the fountain of all their consolation. "The Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation ; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." Hence, when Solomon dedicated the temple, he said, "now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength ; let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness."

All this, however, was only emblematic of the high privilege ever vouchsafed to the people of God in the real presence of God by His Spirit in the Church. The promises of the New Testament are as distinct as the types of the old. Christ has said, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And when He instituted the preached word, and other ordinances of the latter economy, He

said, "lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This presence is explained of His Spirit. He is in the assemblies of the Lord's people, instructing, counselling, warning, and encouraging. The new dispensation was opened by the plentiful and remarkable effusion of the day of Pentecost, when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This was an earnest of what might be expected in future generations.

We must beware, however, of resting in these general views of the presence of the Spirit in the Church. He can be really present in any Church, only by His presence in the hearts of its individual members. He was present in the Church at Jerusalem, while "He sat upon each of them." He was present at the Church in Antioch when He filled the hearts of Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, and Paul, and taught them what they were to say and do. It is said to the whole Church, "ye are an habitation of God through the Spirit." But observe also how explicit are the views given to us of His habitation in all its members. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?" "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us." No words could be more expressive of the real habitation of the souls of men by the Spirit of God, and of His indwelling in every heart where He accomplishes the purposes of His grace.

It is for the accomplishment of these purposes He is there, and our view of the subject would be incomplete without advert-ing to them.

The Spirit inhabits the soul that He may regenerate it. There is a temporary influence exercised on some which is speedily dissipated, and the Spirit is grieved, and departs. But where there is a purpose of mercy He abides, and "saves the soul by the washing of regeneration."

He inhabits it that He may preserve the work which He has begun in it. "Saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Were they to be abandoned for a moment

they would fall from their steadfastness. But it is their security and joy to be able to say, "Christ liveth in me" by His Spirit.

He inhabits the soul to advance His own gracious work there. It is as "the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." In this progress every step is taken under the guidance and power of the Spirit, as well as its commencement. "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."

He inhabits the soul to consummate His work in it. His promise is, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He abides with it till death has done its work. He goes with it through the valley and shadow of death. And presents it to its glorious Head, "complete in Him,"—"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Even the body which "returns to the earth as it was," while "the Spirit goes to God that gave it," is still counted a portion of the Spirit's charge. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

It will be owned, these are purposes worthy of the Spirit's habitation of the temple which He builds, whether that be understood of the Church generally, or of the individual members that compose it. And they prepare us for the third and last remark which we proposed to illustrate.

3. The Church is a temple purified by the Spirit.

This sentiment is very prominent in the text. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

It may be understood of the deportment which every member of the Church is bound to cultivate in himself, as the temple of the Spirit. It is, therefore, said in the context, "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is in the very same spirit this Apostle says to the Ephesians, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all

malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." How just is this demand of consistency ! We feel the influence of the presence of one another. Especially, how are we influenced by the presence of godly men. It restrains and governs us. What, then, ought to be the influence of the Spirit's presence ? He is present, not only to observe our outward conduct, but to mark the most secret exercises of our soul. Then " what manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ? " We must feel the force of Jehovah's appeal—" As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Nor is it enough that we maintain personal holiness. As the whole Church is the temple of God, and every member of it, we must beware that we do not defile it in them. We must be careful that we do not cast a stumbling-block in the way of any. No temptation must be put in the way of others. We are solemnly warned to be watchful lest we should do so. " Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences shall come ; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh." So powerfully did the Apostle Paul feel this danger, that he says, in a case of pure indifference, " If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world endureth, lest I make my brother to offend." Not only so ; while we avoid the temptation and injury of others, we are bound to seek their advancement. It should be our concern that they as well as we shall realise the indwelling of the Spirit and walk consistently.

Nay, farther, it lies upon us to seek the growing usefulness of the whole Church, as the depository of the Spirit, from which a holy influence should go forth on the world around it. It should ever be as it was with the Thessalonians, to whom Paul said, " From you sounded out the word of the Lord ; in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." Is not this the promise, " The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion ? " One prophet has said, " I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing ; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season ; there shall be showers of blessing." And another, in more elevated strains, announces, " It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted


above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Truly, the Church is a temple purified by the Spirit.

In conclusion, let me address to you the question of the text—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" You ought to know it, and never rest until you have evidence that you are living stones in the spiritual building. Having evidence that you are such, you ought to consider it and the claims that are thus made upon you. Personally, you are bound to "live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and be led by the Spirit." Relatively, you are bound to give offence to none, but to seek the holiness and usefulness of all. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

VI.

The Gifts of the Spirit.

"I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."—1 COR. xii. 3-13.

HE works of God are, in their various departments, distinguished by a remarkable variety. It is so in nature. In the landscape, we behold the hill and the valley, the shrub and the majestic tree, the expanded lake and the trickling stream. However great the uniformity, there is ever diversity. No two blades of grass or two leaves of the forest, however closely they may resemble one another, will be found in all respects the same. It is so also with man. Every one resembles all the rest, yet there is something peculiar to distinguish each. This is true alike of body and mind. In the "human face divine," how amazing is this variety. And when we rise to the higher works of God, the same hand is recognised there. In the Church of God, what varied gifts, and graces, and attainments are found in its members. No two of them are precisely equal. The wisdom, and grace, and power of God are singularly displayed in the endowments which He has conferred on His servants. They are adapted to the positions which they

occupy, and the duties to which they are called. In the early Christian Church we are furnished with many illustrative examples. The passage before us recites not a few, and ascribes them to the sovereign disposal of the Spirit. This is the subject to which our attention is now called. Let us, therefore, enter upon it, looking for the enlightenment of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will.

In the text there are three leading views presented to us. 1. We are reminded of the light in which the Spirit ever presents Christ, as the head of the Church, and the source of all spiritual gifts. 2. The Spirit Himself is set forth as the immediate dispenser of these gifts, in harmony with the Father and the Son. And, 3. The gifts themselves are enumerated, which were freely bestowed on the early Christians, and which are to be regarded as models of those that may be expected still, as they are needed by the circumstances and emergencies of the Church. Let us consider these several views, and then conclude with some practical reflections naturally suggested by them.

1. Observe the view that is given of Christ. In ver. 3 we read, "I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." The Spirit never forgets His great office, as it is described by our Lord Himself, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." To honour Christ He needs only to make Him known. If, therefore, any man is found who entertains low conceptions of Christ, either of His personal dignity, or His moral loveliness, it is a proof that such a one is not under the teaching of the Spirit, but that he is deceived and led astray by his own corrupt propensities and imaginations. On the other hand, no one can of himself entertain views of Christ sufficiently elevated and honourable. The human mind will never rise to the lofty conceptions it ought to entertain of the person, and character, and work, and offices of Christ, unless it be enlightened by the teaching, and upheld and strengthened by the power of the Spirit. Particularly, it is only thus His relation to the Church will be ever rightly understood. He is its head. "God hath given Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." He is the source of all vital and heavenly influence. From Him, as their

great fountain, all gifts and graces must be received. This is the light in which He is here presented. This is His connection with the subject of spiritual gifts. But it is one which the human mind will not take of itself. It must be imparted to it by divine teaching. "I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

2. We are next taught that the Spirit is the immediate dispenser of all gifts in harmony and connection with the Father and the Son. The representation is extremely interesting from the 4th to the 7th verse. Ver. 4. "Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." These gifts are all the endowments, mental and physical, that are conferred on the members of the Church, or indeed on the members of society. They are conveyed to those who possess them by the Spirit. He has drawn them out of the fountain of Christ's fulness. For He does not deal with men otherwise than in connection with Christ. Ver. 5. "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." These administrations seem to denote the various dispensations, and the offices connected with them, by means of which God deals with men. There was the Mosaic economy, with its ritual and priesthood; and again the Christian, with its elders and deacons. But all these were under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ. He led the Church in the wilderness, and He continues to lead it still. The dispensation may be changed, but never the head of authority and influence. Ver. 6. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." These operations are the results of the dispensations under which the Church and mankind have been placed. They comprehend all the outward providences and internal influences by means of which their designs have been carried into effect. These are ascribed to God, no doubt designating the Father, in contrast with the Spirit and the Son, who had been previously mentioned. And all three appear to have been specifically named, that the harmony of the Godhead in the government of the world, and the history of redemption, may be manifested. They are one in essence, and one in operation. It is added in ver. 7, "but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Whatever the gift may be that is conferred upon any one, and in which the work of the Spirit

in him is manifested, the design of it is practical and useful. It is not given to him to lay it up in the napkin of indolence and neglect. Nor is he to keep it merely for his own selfish gratification. He is to use it for his own good and that of others. And he is held responsible to do so under the most solemn obligations. Remember the parable of the talents, and the command under which they are all entrusted to us—"occupy till I come." "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

3. Let us then proceed to consider the gifts enumerated, and which, while they show us what were the endowments of the early Christians, adapted to their peculiar circumstances, may serve as models of those now needed and conferred in our own time, and upon ourselves. They are recited in the next three verses, from the 8th to the 10th, and we shall notice them in their order.

"To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom." Wisdom has been commonly defined the power of choosing the highest ends with the best means of obtaining them. It is a gift of singular excellence. It may be regarded as the essence of what the apostle elsewhere calls "a sound mind." It is the most serviceable quality in the business of life. By it a man ever perceives what he ought to do, or not to do. And how often are the most splendid accomplishments and the best opportunities lost through the want of it? Let it be remembered it can proceed only from the Spirit. Whoever enjoys it should bear in mind it is to Him he is indebted for it. Whoever wants it is encouraged to ask it from Him. We have the special and gracious promise, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." And how divine the description of the wisdom which He confers! "The wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This was precisely the wisdom that appeared in Christ; and it reappears in a measure in every one to whom "he of God is made wisdom."

"To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." As distinguished from wisdom this seems to signify the capacity for acquiring information. It is sometimes found where there is not

wisdom. There are prodigies of learning who are incompetent, from the want of wisdom, to turn their possessions to any profitable account. But wisdom and knowledge are by no means incompatible with one another. Both may be enjoyed by the same person. It is when they are united that we have the highest specimens of mental power. It is the office of the one to collect materials from all the sources of information within the reach of man, while it is the property of the other to dispose and employ them for practical purposes. The one collects facts, and the other digests and uses them. The one pursues its objects in the secrecy of the closet, while the other is mainly occupied with the business of life. Both are the gifts of the Spirit.

“To another faith by the same Spirit.” It is difficult to determine what is the precise view to be taken of faith in this connection. It is sometimes used to signify a gift. Thus Paul says in the first verse of the next chapter, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” In this view it may be possessed without vital godliness, and was so possessed by both Balaam and Judas. At other times it is used to denote a gracious principle. It conducts the sinner to the Saviour. It unites him with Him. He is thus saved by faith. He is delivered at once from the guilt and the power of sin. He “walks by faith and not by sight.” Thus he is ever kept in fellowship with Christ, and under the dominion of the unseen and eternal world. The things of time are seen in their true character and value. The judgment of the divine Word is allowed to determine his estimate of all things. He does not fear man because he fears God. His “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And so he “walks with God,” until it is told “he is not, for God took him.” This is indeed a gift worthy of the Spirit to bestow. O! let us say to Him, “Lord increase our faith.”

“To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.” These are closely connected with faith. They were bestowed on the early Christians in the measure of their faith. When they failed on one occasion to heal a lunatic who had been brought to them,

and asked of Jesus, "why could we not cast them out?" he said unto them, because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." No doubt these gifts were miraculous and peculiar to the time when they were enjoyed, being necessary to furnish evidence of the truth preached by the Apostles. Yet the concluding remark of Christ, just quoted, shows there is a close connection between gracious exercises and extraordinary gifts. Nor was that confined to the Apostolic age. James writes for the instruction of the Church in all ages, "is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The oil with which he was anointed was used for its medicinal properties. And it was accompanied by prayer to teach us that the means of healing may ever be employed, in dependence on the divine blessing, and that when so blessed they shall be successful.

"To another the working of miracles." The faith of miracles was not confined to gifts of healing. It extended to all the circumstances of the church in which it would be necessary to manifest, by obvious tokens of divine power, that they who exerted it were taught by the divine wisdom and spoke with authority. Thus, in Moses it was exhibited while he brought down the judgments of God on Pharaoh and his people, when he opened the passage of the Red Sea, brought water out of the rock, fed the people with manna, and was enabled to make other symptoms of the divine presence and power to pass before them. The same may be witnessed in Peter when he struck Ananias and Sapphira with sudden death, to expose the sin of falsehood and reprove their deep criminality. In like manner Paul was allowed to smite Elymas, the sorcerer, with blindness. The great lesson conveyed to us is, the assurance that God will furnish His people at all times with the power and the qualification necessary to their peculiar position. They have not the power of miracles now, because it is not required, and because its continuance in the Church is not only unnecessary, but would weaken the evidence drawn

from the miracles of the Apostolic age. They would cease to be miraculous if they were permanent. It is enough to know the Church shall never want whatever is necessary to its high mission. And the law abides the same now as ever; "according to your faith be it unto you."

"To another prophecy." In the exercise of this gift some were enabled to foretell future events. Agabus took the girdle off Paul, and bound himself with it, declaring, "so shall they bind the man whose is this girdle at Jerusalem." And so it came to pass. In its higher exercises under this form it has announced to the church the great outlines of its future history, and we are continually gathering fresh proofs of its truth. But it is not less important to understand by prophecy the capacity of preaching the Word with power. To prophesy is to preach. And this is a talent specially conferred by the Divine Spirit. Paul delighted to call himself the Apostle "not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Such, also, in the true spirit of the words, is every faithful preacher of the cross. He is the ambassador of Christ, speaks in His name, and is acknowledged, and qualified, and blessed by His Spirit. He may still plead the promise, "I will give thee a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist."

"To another discerning of spirits." "Try the spirits," said the Apostle John, "because many false Prophets are gone out into the world." This was a gift much needed in the early times. For many sought to deceive. It was a grand aim of Satan to bring the church under the influence of false teachers when the Scriptures were not complete, nor yet placed in the hands of all the people. Nor is it of less importance in any age. In the exercise of this gift, we perceive who are fitted for the various offices of the Church, and who are not adapted to them. We apprehend who are the right men for the right place. We are guarded against imposture, and loss of time, and talent, and opportunity, while we are well guided in turning all the available talent of the church to the best account. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

"To another divers kinds of tongues." Witness the day of Pentecost. The collected strangers from all the surrounding

nations, exclaimed, "we do all hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." This may be pronounced the highest gift ever conferred on the Church. And we see its counterpart in the remarkable capacity now and ever bestowed on some to acquire a knowledge of foreign languages. The Scriptures have been rendered into no less than two hundred of these. And so, by means of that gift, the time is approaching when "the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters do the sea."

"To another the interpretation of tongues." While some spake in foreign tongues, others were qualified to interpret the meaning to the Church. So, in our day, many are blessed with "aptness to teach." One is elevated to the perception of high and holy principles, and another is enabled to break the Bread of Life with inimitable simplicity, and yet irresistible power.

To all these gifts, how appropriately is it added in the 11th verse, "all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." There is no gift that is not derived from Him, and, in His distribution, he acts as a Sovereign, "doing what He will with His own." And His great purpose by each is the common good of all, thus beautifully declared in the two verses that follow. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Looking at the subject in this practical light, what, then, are the lessons which we are taught by these spiritual gifts ?

1. Our hope is mightily encouraged. We see what was done in other times, and may infer what can be done in the future. Agents were raised up and qualified for all that needed to be done, and the same can be done again. Let us wait on the Spirit, and ask Him to do so. Let us pray to Him for the men who can do the work of the Lord, and for His blessing upon their measures. If so honoured, He will hear us.

2. Our diligence is demanded to the utmost. Every gift which the Spirit has bestowed is to be employed. This is true of health, riches, all bodily, mental, and moral powers. "Glorify God in your body and spirit, which are His." Beware of seeking

gifts which you have not, while you neglect those which you have. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

3. How unjustifiable is envy? The gifts of every one are for the good of all, and those of all for the benefit of every one. All are dependent on one another. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." "Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou which thou hast not received? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" To be proud of our own attainments, or jealous of those of others, is in itself most unreasonable, and a high offence against that Spirit who is the Author of all our gifts.

4. All should unite their efforts in the one great cause of truth and righteousness. Our motto should be, "striving together for the faith of the gospel." All the objects in the landscape unite to perfect its beauty. All the members of the body join to consummate its strength and symmetry. All the streams of the mountain meet in the one river of the valley. So all the multitude of them that believe should be of one heart, and one soul, to prosecute the one great work of God on the earth, and win it for the service and glory of Christ.

VII.

The Holy Ghost a Transforming Spirit.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.



IN the passage connected with the text, we have an example of what we had occasion to remark in the commencement of these discourses—the grouping together of many testimonies to the work of the Spirit. It would seem as if the inspired author of the Epistles cannot notice this subject without dwelling largely upon it. One thought gives rise to another, and one view is introduced after another, until it is rendered impossible to consider each apart. In the present instance the text is selected, out of many testimonies with which it is connected, because it will lead us, in the illustration of it, to make extensive reference to them. It contains a sort of summary of what had been previously said. The very reading of it impresses us with the comprehensiveness of its meaning and the variety of its views. We will need to inquire—1. Into "the glass," and what is to be understood by it—2. Into the "glory of the Lord," and how it is seen in that glass—3. Into the "open face," with which the glory of the Lord may be seen in this glass—4. Into the change effected by that contemplation—"we are changed into the same image."—5. Into its progress "from glory to glory"—and 6. Into the divine agent in all this work—"the Spirit of the Lord." Thus almost every term in the text is found to be full of meaning. And yet there is a close connection between all its parts, and they harmonize in one beautiful exhibition of the doctrine of the Spirit. May He guide and bless us while we behold it.

1. What is the glass into which we are to look? This is abundantly explained in the context. It is thus described at

the 7th verse—"if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The contrast is between the dispensation administered by Moses, and that established by Jesus Christ. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Let us enter a little into the features of this contrast.

Of the Mosaic economy there are these notices. It is called "the ministration of death." Such it was in itself. It could not, by any of its own provisions, save the sinner. This view is put strongly by the Apostle when he says to the Hebrews, in the beginning of the 10th chapter—"the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect; for then would they not have ceased to be offered; because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there was a remembrance made again of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Yet let not these views be misunderstood. By itself the law could only condemn, but as "a shadow of good things to come," it directed the worshipper to the Saviour. If he trusted in it he found it only "a ministration of death," but if in Him to whom it pointed, his soul was saved. Of this ministration it is said, "it was written and engraven in stones." This determines the application to the ten commandments given to Moses on the Mount. These are singled out as a prominent feature in the economy. They were given in the manner described to import their permanent nature and inviolable claims. They offered no pardon, and they demanded a perfect obedience. Yet the dispensation is pronounced to have been glorious. The radiance of Moses' countenance, as he descended from the mount was only an emblem of it. It was glorious as a

publication of the moral law, which is essentially "holy and just and good." And it was glorious in its ceremonial law, as an exposition of the way of pardon and acceptance through the sacrifice of the promised Saviour. Yet that glory was to be done away. The economy was designed to be only temporary and preparatory. And good reason have we to rejoice it was so, because in itself, and independent of the better dispensation which it was designed to introduce, it was simply, and is here pronounced to have been, "the ministration of condemnation."

On the other hand, consider the description of the new economy to which it was to give place. It is called "the ministration of the Spirit." We are not to suppose the Spirit was never given under that of Moses, or that he was not concerned in its appointment. He was given, but it was in smaller measure, and only in virtue of Him who was to appear in fulness of time. But when the promised One did come and was glorified, such was to be the out-pouring of the Spirit, that the dispensation should bear His name. It is farther called "the ministration of righteousness." It was eminently so, for Christ became "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He maintained the righteousness of the law and magnified it. And the Spirit which He purchased would come down with His hallowed influences and dwell in the souls of believers as His chosen temple. It is, therefore, added, "it remaineth." It will be permanent. It is perfect in its nature. It is enduring in the purpose of its author. It is to be supplanted by no other economy. Sinners need nothing but what it provides. It provides Christ, and they are complete in Him. Well, therefore, is it pronounced to be glorious. It is said to "exceed in glory." It is declared, "even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." It was glorious in its author, and nature, and purpose, and issues. And it need only be added, this is that "glass" into which we are invited to look. It is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, or perhaps more strictly, it is Christ Himself.

2. What then, let us next inquire, are we to understand by "the glory of the Lord," to be seen in this glass?

Before directly replying, a word may be appropriately said upon the propriety of the figure used in the text. By means of a glass or mirror we may become familiar with the appearance

of an object which we have never seen. It may be so placed as to be reflected by the mirror, and in this way presented to our vision. Suppose the human person. We may know the features of a man whom we have never seen, by having an opportunity to look upon his person reflected in a mirror. It is precisely thus we have been privileged to behold the glory of the Lord. "No man hath seen God at any time." "No man can see Him and live." But we have seen Him in the glass of the gospel. He is reflected to us in Christ. "His name is in Him." He is seen in the person, ministry, life, and doctrine of Christ as in a glass. In His person, for our Lord Himself hath said, "He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also." And Paul denominates Him, "God manifest in the flesh." In His ministry, for it is written, "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He has fully declared His perfections, character, and will. In His life, for the conduct of Christ was an embodiment to the eye of what God will do, and of what He requires us to do. And in His doctrine, for that is a full development of the mind of God toward us, and the demands that He makes upon us. In a word, nothing could be more just than the announcement, that in Christ, as in a glass, we behold the glory of God. Let us then inquire what we are to understand by it, and how it is reflected in Him.

By the glory of God we mean the manifestation of His perfections. His glory needs only that He shall be known. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." But when Christ appeared, and the hosts of heaven raised the cry, "glory be to God in the highest," no wonder they should do so. Such a display of the divine character had never been made before. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." How, then, were these perfections exhibited in Christ? His wisdom? Christ is specially denominated "the wisdom of God." He embodied it to the eye of man when He showed how Jehovah could be at once "a just God and a Saviour." His power? In like manner Christ is called the power of God, and He displayed it when He rose from the dead, and triumphed over sin, and rescued His people out of the hand of the destroyer. His holiness? Truly in the person of Christ the inscription is written, "holiness unto the

Lord." He exemplified it in a life of perfect purity, and showed what is acceptable with God. His justice? He demonstrated that it could not be sacrificed. "Though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. "Awake, O sword, against the Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, smite the shepherd." His goodness? "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." His truth? "All His promises are in Christ yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Not only are these divine perfections all exhibited to our view, but presented in blessed harmony, conspiring to the one great end of saving the sinner. We see wisdom devising the means, power executing it, holiness requiring it, justice satisfied with it, goodness delighting in it, and truth confirming it. We may sing over the gracious and glorious revelation, "blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance; in Thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Surely it will be admitted that in the glass of the gospel we behold the glory of God."

What encouragement is thus given to us to accept of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus! As the sinner is saved God is glorified. "God shall appear in His glory when He buildeth up Zion." This is our great plea, and it is truly acceptable with God. Yet let us not forget great is the responsibility that is thus laid upon us. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" God must be glorified, if not in our salvation, in our condemnation. Bearing this thought in mind we shall be better prepared to consider—

3. The duty and privilege of beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel "with open face."

The open face might have been rendered with unveiled face. It supposes the removal of certain obstacles by which the perception of the truth and meaning of the gospel is hindered. In some this is ignorance, in others prejudice, and in all sin. These veils must be pushed aside, and the mind, freed from their intervention, should look directly, and steadily, and solemnly into the great realities discovered to us in Christ as in a glass.

This sentiment is well illustrated in the context, by a reference

to the case of the Jews in the study of the Old Testament. At the 14th verse we read, "their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same vail, untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." We are amazed at the blindness of Israel. They read their divine Scriptures, but they could not see Christ in them. The very object which they were intended to reveal they could not discern. He said to them, "search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." He was in every page, but they could see Him in none. We ascribe it to their unbelief, and blindness, and hardness of heart. We never think of justifying them. We pronounce their conduct unreasonable, contrary to the clearest evidence, and such as utterly to be condemned.

We need to be reminded, however, that such conduct is not peculiar to the Jews. All men are exposed to the same spiritual blindness, and need to be watchful against it. Observe how the apostle presents the subject in the following chapter:—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And again, in contrast to this danger, to which all are exposed, he thus explains the blessedness of believers, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." If any have been enabled, with unvailed face, to behold the glory of God in the gospel, it must be ascribed to the enlightenment of sovereign grace.

Nor let it be supposed this blindness is without sin. Our Lord has said, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." He attributes their rejection of Himself directly to the love of sin. Whatever the form may be, this is the secret cause. If a man really see his sin, and hate it, and desire to be delivered from it, there is no doubt he will gratefully embrace the Saviour, who tenderly invites him to come unto Him. Of this every man may be conscious, who carefully looks into the exercises of his own mind, or observes the reasonings and actions of others.

The duty to which we are thus urged is well expressed by the Apostle James, saying, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man, beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Let us read the word, and meet its discoveries with a cheerful obedience. Whatever it teaches, let us believe. Whatever it requires, let us do. It is in this spirit we shall see its revelations with unvailed face.

To do so, a counsel and an encouragement are given by the Apostle in the context, well worthy of our attention. The counsel is in the 16th verse, "when Israel shall turn to the Lord the vail shall be taken away." Whenever the Jew sees Christ in the Scriptures, his blindness is removed. And it is the same with all. Keep "looking unto Jesus" in the word, and that will prove its clearest exposition. For the encouragement is added, "the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit is that being of whom the apostle had said, "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Now, the very office of that Spirit, is to reveal and glorify Christ. And whenever, as we contemplate Jesus, the Spirit does so, there is liberty. The soul is set free from the trammels that bound it before. In embracing Christ, through the grace of the Spirit, it enters into the liberty of the children of God. Let us then observe these two things in the study of the Scriptures, seeking Christ as our great object, and doing so in dependence on the grace and guidance of the Spirit, and so shall we come to the duty and privilege of beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord with an open unvailed face.

4. The effect may then be anticipated as it is described by the Apostle, "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Our time shuts us up to the consideration of the three last topics, proposed at the outset, under this one sentiment. But they may very properly be so contemplated.

The change which the sinner needs, and which is thus produced, is said to be "into the same image." It is the image of

God that is meant. While we discern His perfections and character, as they are revealed in Christ, we are constrained to admire and imitate them. We are captivated with Him, and as we love Him, we would be like Him. We are enamoured of His wisdom, and would walk in His counsels. We are encouraged by His power, and trust in it for protection and support. We approve of His holiness, and seek to be holy, as He is holy. We are awed by His justice, and fear the Lord. We are delighted with His goodness, and would both confide in it ourselves, and dispense its blessings to others. We observe His truth, and plead and practise His faithfulness. More especially, the believer sets Christ before him as the model after which his character should be formed. His piety, and purity, and benevolence, and zeal, and self-denial, and forbearance, are studied and copied. He desires to say, "we have the mind of Christ." He would "walk even as He also walked." And he feels the force of the apostolic rule, which recites of Him, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps." Thus he becomes "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He "puts on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." He is changed into the same image "which he beholds with open face in God in Christ."

Once formed into this image, he grows more and more into conformity to it. His progress is from "glory to glory." One glorious triumph over sin prepares the way for another. One attainment leads on to others. "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." He "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." His habit is that of which the evangelist John says, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He lives upon the promise, "the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Thus is he "changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

But let us not omit to add it is "by the Spirit of the Lord." In the margin the reading is, "of the Lord the Spirit." It suggests that the interpretation may be, the believer is formed into the image of the Spirit. If this be adopted, then the meaning

is, that while he is made like the Father and the Son, he is no less made like the Spirit—pure, holy, and heavenly as He is. But the more obvious sentiment is, that all this blessed work is carried on by the agency of the Spirit. He begins the work of conforming the sinner to the image of God and His Son, and He carries it on. He sustains it, advances it, and will mature it. Nor will He ever abandon it, until His servant realizes the glory of which John spake—"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

With one remark we conclude. That lovely moon derives all its light from the sun; and, shining in his brightness, reflects his glory. So should sinners receive and reflect the light of the sun of righteousness. And it is precisely as they do so they realize the sentiment of the text—"we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

VIII.

The Life and Warfare of the Spirit in the Soul.

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law—If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."—GAL. v. 16, 17, 18, 25.



WE must compress this subject of the Spirit on which it is our privilege to continue to dwell. We are forced to consider, in conjunction, many topics on which we would desire to dwell in detail. We would choose to make every statement in the verses before us matter of distinct investigation. But it may not be, for the time would fail us. We must be content to classify them. And when we do so, we find in them two leading thoughts. 1. The work of the Spirit in the believer; and 2. the reasons why he should be careful to maintain it. Let our attention then be directed to this summary of the truth in the verses that have been read, and may He be present with His divine power to bless our exercises!

I. The verses contain a comprehensive view of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Three terms are used, of deep significance. It is for the purpose of considering them unitedly that we have joined the 25th verse with the three beginning at the 16th. Together, they present the subject in considerable fulness. The terms are, "to live in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit." It will be profitable to consider them consecutively, remembering they so occur in the history of the Spirit's work in the soul; and are thus descriptive of the progress of the divine life.

1. "We live in the Spirit." It is the property of the Spirit to

begin the life of God in the soul of man. He is naturally dead, and no power short of that which belongs to the Spirit can renew the soul in righteousness. He alone can say to it live, and accompany the word with efficacy. We may ask, as did the prophet of the dry bones of the valley, can they live? And our only refuge is with him to cry, "come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Blessed be His name, He is able and willing to hear that prayer. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Of how many may this affirmation be triumphantly made! Behold the thief on the cross, mocking the Saviour when He was hung upon it, yet before he expired, calling upon Him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Did he not live by the Spirit? See the hardened jailor of Philippi, crying in the agony of a convinced sinner, "what must I do to be saved?" and then "he rejoiced in God with all his house." "He passed from death unto life." Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, immersed in its cares, and at the call of Jesus he arose and followed Him. Saul went out "breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples," and on Jesus revealing Himself to him he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Look at the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, all the members of the early churches, and contrasting what they had been with what they became, the change can be accounted for in no other way than that they lived in the Spirit. And we may well believe that so many examples of conversion are recorded in the divine word, at once to proclaim its necessity, unfold its nature, and disclose its author. "Ye must be born of the Spirit."

Nor let it be supposed this origination of the divine life is less necessary now than it ever was. It is needed as much and is provided for as effectually by the grace of the Spirit. See that careless sinner, living in the utmost unconcern about the soul, and salvation, and eternity. He is alarmed, awakened, convinced, and converted. He lives by the Spirit. See that worldling, whose whole soul is bound up in the cares of this life. It loses its interest for him, and nothing will satisfy him but the "one thing needful." He lives by the Spirit. See that self-righteous man. He builds himself up in his fancied worthiness. But detecting its insufficiency, he never rests until he can

say of Christ, "This is the name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." He lives by the Spirit. See that prodigal. He is devoted to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. But he discerns the vanity of them all, and has the blessing pronounced upon him—"blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He lives by the Spirit. And in him as in all the rest we behold the new creation of the soul in righteousness by the quickening Spirit.

Let us remember no change short of that from death unto life will avail for the salvation of any soul, and no agency short of that of the Spirit can ever accomplish it. Let us cry earnestly to Him for ourselves and others, and not rest until "we live in the Spirit."

2. Thus made alive, "we walk in the Spirit." Nothing could be more descriptive of the natural effect of the change that has been accomplished. As soon as the child is born, it begins to discover symptoms of activity. And it rests not until it is able to walk abroad in the consciousness of growing strength. There are many aspects in which this representation of the divine life is justly descriptive of its nature.

It reminds us of our *dependence* on the Spirit. It is not enough that He begin the divine life; He must maintain it. There is extreme danger of overlooking this dependence. We are prone to trust in our own powers. But so sure as we do so we shall fall. In the Divine Word, all the exercises of the believer are shown to be rendered effectual by the Spirit. Does he pray? This is the promise—"I will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplications." "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." Is it the study of the Word? We are taught to pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Is it to resist temptation? The promise is, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" Is it perseverance in holiness?" The direction is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure." Truly we must "walk in the Spirit."

The expression implies also *consistency*. Our deportment must be in harmony with the character and mind of the Spirit. His will must be our constant guide. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let

all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from among you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Only thus can we walk in the Spirit.

And, let it be added, the very term is significant of *progress*. If we walk, we advance in our journey. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." So must every one who has entered on the divine life. "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3. To complete this view of the subject, the believer is "led of the Spirit." The term is intended to denote an entire surrender of ourselves to His authority and guidance. The blind man yields himself to the direction of his guide. He has no choice but to follow where he is led. The traveller resigns himself to his guide in the unknown and trackless desert. So does the believer give himself up to the Spirit. He does so by an entire acquiescence in the testimony of His Word. It is the chart of his voyage. It is the map of his journey through life. His only question is, "How is it written?" He never sets up His judgment or will against those of the Spirit in the Word. He believes what is testified without questioning, and he does what is commanded without hesitation. In obedience to the Word, he gives himself up to the discharge of his duty. Nothing can hinder or deter him. An enlightened conscience is supreme, and he must and will obey it. In the path of duty he finds the truest happiness and the greatest safety. And he counts it perfect liberty to be "led of the Spirit."

Is not this a just account of the Christian life? It consists in living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit. Is it not at once our wisdom and duty to seek and prosecute such a life? Let us, then, that we may be stimulated to do so, proceed to consider—

II. The reasons by which we are urged in the text to maintain it. Several are mentioned. We shall notice them separately. And it will not be necessary to go beyond them.

1. We are told, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." This is self-evident. If we yield ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit, He will keep us far away from all sinful indulgences. Humbly confiding in Him, we shall not trust in our own strength, and so we shall be kept. Consulting His will, we shall be delivered from the delusions and perversities of our own. Advancing in all holy attainments under His grace and guidance, our principles shall be more and more strengthened and confirmed, while temptations shall be proportionally weakened. We shall be great gainers by this course. It is expressly written, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Is it not the part of wisdom, then, to obtain dominion over the flesh? Look at its doings and their results. The Apostle enumerates them in the very passage before us. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which commit such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In what condition must that mind be that would not desire deliverance from these dire and disgusting evils? It is our interest to seek it as well for time as eternity. Look at the impure, and the sufferings which their indulgences entail. Think of the poor drunkard, and the fearful distresses to which he is heir. We know the harrowing scenes through which the idolater must pass. "Truly, their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." He that rises up to sin, must lie down in sorrow. The way of sinners is hard. God has said, "The wages of sin is death;" "Be sure your sins shall find you out." And if it be so in time, how is it to be in eternity? The Word is plain beyond mistake. Such "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." How could they? Suppose them admitted there, and what must their condition be? Think of the impure, and ungodly, and idolatrous going into the presence of a holy God. How are they to meet Him? How dwell with Him? How enjoy Him? How do so for ever and ever? Think of them going into the companionship of "the spirits of just men made perfect." What fellowship could they have? Think of them with holy and happy angels. How would they regard their

presence? More need not be said to urge the wisdom of living, and walking, and being led by the Spirit, by the assurance that if "we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

2. A second reason goes farther. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." This is to be understood in the sense in which the Apostle says to the Romans, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There the law is contemplated in the light of the covenant into which it had been made with man at the beginning, promising its highest rewards if it were obeyed, but threatening its severest sentence if it were broken. It was broken, and therefore the condition of all who were under it was calamitous. But all had broken it. To all therefore it became "a law of sin and of death." It was perverted into a law of sin, because it offered no pardon, it imparted no grace, it left the sinner under the dominion of iniquity, and it only provoked him to higher offences by plunging him into hopeless despair. Its fruits may be seen in all mankind who have been left under its dominion, whether in heathen or Christian lands. It is to them, by necessary consequence, "a law of death." It passes sentence of condemnation upon them now, and it reserves them in chains unto the judgment of the great day. What an unspeakable blessing to be delivered from the law under these aspects of it? Such, then, is the happiness of those who are led by the Spirit. How so? The Spirit discovers to them the utter hopelessness of attaining to acceptance with God by their obedience to the law. He enlightens them to apprehend the truth that, "by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified." Thus delivering them from error and delusion, He guides them into the truth. He reveals Jesus to them. He shows them how they may be accepted in Him. And He enables them to acquiesce in the blessed discovery that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The consequences are apparent. The law ceases to be to them a law of either sin or death. It becomes to them, on the contrary, a law of life. They no longer tremble before it, because they see it has been fully met and satisfied in their Substitute, "who died the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Not only do they cease to fear it; they approve it. They appeal to it for

their justification. They see that it now maintains their cause on the ground that Christ has magnified it and made it honourable. Therefore they love it. It is in their esteem holy, and just, and good. Although they know their obedience to it is not the ground of their hope, yet they delight and determine to walk in its ways. It is truly to them a law of liberty. There is fulfilled to them the promise, "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." By being emancipated from the law as a covenant, they are bound to it as a rule. With enlarged hearts they run in the way of God's commandments. They have thus all the blessedness of a holy life on earth, and the prospect of a glorious reward in the life that is to come. And so shall they realise the promise, "if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

3. This reason, however, needs to be viewed in connection with the third and last, the warfare by which the divine life must ever be maintained. It is thus expressed in the 17th verse, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things which ye would." While it is true that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," it does not follow that the flesh is extinct. Crucifixion is a tedious and cruel death. And such is found to be that of the flesh. It is tenacious of life. It struggles hard to maintain its place and dominion. Indwelling sin is therefore the calamity of all the people of God. The Apostle Paul spoke for them all when he said, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The ways in which the flesh seeks to perpetuate its dominion are numberless. It employs all the senses of the body. It tries by the eye to present such sights as shall inflame the passions of the soul. In like manner it speaks through the ear to the appetites of the body. The tongue is a ready member for its purposes. The passions are seized upon continually. And, in short, the whole man will be employed to strengthen the desires and purposes of the flesh in lusting against the Spirit.

But, on the other hand, the Spirit lusteth against the flesh. He has taken his place in the soul and made it a new man.

From that position he will not be dislodged. He conquered at the first in the new creation, and he continues to conquer in maintaining and promoting his own work. He began it in sovereign grace, and in the same spirit he will carry it to the end. He, too, uses the senses of the body and the affections of the soul. He employs the eye, and the ear, and the tongue, as well as our hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows, and turns them all to account for edification. Besides, he carries on a communion with the soul itself, with which the stranger does not intermeddle. He conveys thoughts, and imparts impressions, and suggests motives, which, unseen by the eye of man, restrain, or excite, or guide the conduct. And thus, in every gracious soul, while the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, the Spirit also lusteth against the flesh.

The consequence is well told, "ye cannot do the things that ye would." The believer would be free from all temptation, but he cannot. He would be wholly and for ever divorced from sin, but he cannot. He would uninterruptedly and universally delight himself in God and in holiness, but he cannot. He would be perfect as God is perfect, but he cannot.

Still, many important ends are served by this warfare, which he is destined to endure. It gives him a better knowledge of self and sin. It humbles him. It endears the Saviour. It commends the riches of divine grace. It makes him watchful. It exercises and elevates all his faculties and attainments. It makes him a mightier man than otherwise he could ever be. It weans him from the world. It ripens him for heaven. It will make its rest more sweet. It will furnish joyous recollections of the triumphs of grace throughout eternity.

How solemn, then, the duty that now devolves on the believer to maintain this warfare. It cannot better be expressed than in the language of Paul to the Ephesians, "finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with

truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

The application of this argument to the subject before us is plain. If we are to live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and be led by the Spirit, we must be prepared to maintain the warfare of the Spirit against the flesh. Paul did so when he said, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." Is it not a solemn thought that this warfare is carried on in the heart of every believer? It ought powerfully to impress and influence us. We cannot be indifferent to it. If ever we become so the flesh will prevail. Jesus understood it well, and has said, "what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." Let us bear in mind, and constantly act on the three counsels of the Lord, and we shall be safe—"live in the Spirit—walk in the Spirit—and be led of the Spirit."

IX.

The Fruit of the Spirit.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."—GAL. v. 22, 23.



It is observable that the term used in the text is fruit and not fruits—the singular and not the plural. It is very customary to quote it as if it were not the fruit, but the fruits of the Spirit. In all cases we should keep close to the very words employed by the Spirit. We may be sure He never errs in selecting those which are the most appropriate. A little reflection and observation are apt to be sufficient for discovering the reasons of His preference. And it is so in the instance before us. There is an important lesson in the choice of fruit rather than fruits. It teaches us that all the graces named in the text are required to constitute the fruit of the Spirit. It is true every one of them is His production, and every one of them is excellent in its nature, and blessed in its results. But no one of them is sufficient. It is not enough that one or more of them is found in the character. Many are apt to be satisfied if they possess even one of these graces. It is not unusual to find examples in which the possession of one is pleaded as an excuse for the want of others. It is sometimes apparently assumed that all need not be cultivated. But this is a fatal error. It is condemned by the language of the text. It reminds us that all the graces are to be possessed and cherished. And it warns us that it is only when it is so that we can be said to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. Let us then now examine the nature of it by considering the several graces that compose it. Any one of them would be enough, and more than enough, to occupy all our space. But we cannot, in our present exer-

cise, go thus fully into the subject. We must be satisfied with a few remarks on each of the nine graces mentioned in the text. O that the Spirit might be pleased to produce and cherish them in all our hearts and lives.

1. Love is appropriately placed first. None of the rest can exist without it. It is truly divine in its nature. And often in the history of the soul's conversion it is the first that becomes marked in the character. At the time of the soul's espousals with Christ, it is captivated with Him. Its obligations to Him are so powerfully felt that the song of praise bursts from a full heart—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

But wherein does this grace consist? It is seen in two principal exercises, the love of God and of man; and we cannot so well explain it as by noticing these apart.

Wherever the Spirit dwells there is love to God. This arises out of his enlightenment. He reveals God in Christ to the sinner. There he discovers Him "reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing to men their trespasses." Before, he may have been indifferent to Him, or at enmity with Him. He looked upon Him as an enemy. He desired not the knowledge of His ways. He shunned the thought of Him, and had no apprehension or desire of communion with Him. But now there is an entire change. He has learned to say, "this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." He sees this is his friend. He adores Him as God his Saviour. He beholds in His perfections his security and happiness. He draws near to Him. He walks with Him. He loves Him, and he says, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

Thus loving God, the natural and necessary consequence is the love of man. He who loves God must love every creature that He has made. The one exercise is comprehended in the other. The measure of this love depends on the interest which God has manifested in any being. Angels, men, all the creatures are regarded as God regards them. Thus, he who has seen God in Christ, discovering His love to sinners, finds his mind drawn out towards the same objects in the highest interest. He loves the

ungodly, and longs and labours for their salvation. He loves the godly, and rejoices in them as the children of His Father. He is deeply concerned in the children of men, and all that appertains to them, because He sees that God is so. And so our Lord represents the love of God and the love of man as inseparably united, saying, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

2. Joy is next mentioned, and it is easy to see how properly it is placed in this connection. If we love God we are conscious He becomes our portion. Thus what a treasure have we found ! Everything is found in Him that not only satisfies, but elevates. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom we have now received the atonement." We have joy in Himself, seeing the divine and blessed perfections that adorn His character. We rejoice in His word, seeing the gracious revelation it makes of the will of God. We joy in His promises, seeing the glorious prospects which His word opens up to all who believe it. We joy in what He has done in both creation and redemption ; in what He is doing in the dispensation of His providence ; and in what He will do until His people are all brought home to glory. It is especially to be observed, that thus to rejoice in the Lord is represented to be not merely a privilege, but a duty. It is a privilege, for it confers the highest happiness. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." But it is no less a duty. The apostle enjoins, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." It is a duty enforced alike by regard to God and to ourselves. We owe it to Him, for He is worthy of all the confidence it expresses in Him, and all the honour it reflects upon Him. And we owe it to ourselves, for it is a mighty principle of obedience in the soul. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The child who is happy in his parent whom he loves, renders a cheerful and hearty obedience. So also he who is happy in God, and loves Him, delights to serve Him. And, therefore, nothing could be more natural or proper than the order of the text in which the fruit of the Spirit is represented to be first love, and then joy.

3. And the same remark applies to the third grace mentioned, which is peace. It might at first sight be supposed peace would precede joy. So also it may sometimes be found to be. But this is probably not the usual course of the Spirit. On the

contrary, when He gives such a view to the soul as induces it to love God, there is apt to spring up instantaneously the feeling of joy. When a man feels he has escaped from some imminent danger, joy is the natural expression of the mind. It is the same when he finds he has been put in possession of some large benefit. But this joyous feeling is apt soon to give place to another, somewhat lower in its tone but more permanent in its exercise, and, it may be added, more safe and suited to our present condition. It is a just estimate of the blessing obtained when it is leisurely considered and proved. It is peace, springing out of a just sense of its value. Thus, then, it is with the exercises of many in the divine life. The joyous feeling excited at the beginning is found to settle in a calm and well-founded peace. And good reason is there for such a state of mind. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The more carefully the believing soul surveys the ground on which it places its hopes, the more reason it sees to be satisfied with it. It is nothing less than the rock of ages. It cannot fail. All we need is the consciousness that we build upon it. Then can we enter into the words of inspiration—"behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation, and he that believeth shall not make haste."

These two graces of peace and joy relate no doubt especially to our fellowship with God, though by no means exclusively so. For wherever they are exercised towards Him, they powerfully influence our conduct towards men, and as we are happy and at peace with Him, so are we with men. But now we proceed to another grace that refers mainly to men. It is—

4. Long-suffering. Not that it does so exclusively. There is a sense in which it relates to God. It consists, in that view, in quiet submission to His will. It appears in the form of patience. We are made to feel that while God so bears with us and our sins, we may well bear with Him and His dispensations. But while this is true, the principal exercise of long-suffering is assuredly towards men. It consists, in that relation, in enduring the wrongs which they do us, or the disappointments they cause us, or the oppositions they make to us, or the temptations they cast in our way. And well may we bear with all these. Let us only think what God bears at our hands, and it will be a power-

ful argument to induce us to bear with others. You recollect our Lord's answer to the question, "How often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? I say not unto thee till seven times, but till seventy times seven." And you know the ground on which He places this duty in the prayer which He has given for our constant use, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And it is the only petition of which He has thought proper to give an explanation and a reason, adding, "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." And who can forget His memorable parable of the debtor, in which He shows the readiness of His Lord to forgive Him, while He would show no compassion to His fellow-servant, and so brought upon himself the full expression of His Master's displeasure. All this goes to urge the one lesson that marks a deep sense of the forbearance of God towards us, we must feel the obligation of exercising long-suffering to others.

5. Then follows a kindred grace, gentleness. It consists in the refinement which the gospel of Christ produces in the rude character of the sinner. Wherever he is found, uninfluenced by it, there is a selfishness that urges him forward to seek with impetuosity what he thinks will promote his interests, or gratify his wishes. But only let the Spirit of God take possession of his mind, and give him a just view of himself, and of the claims of others, and a mighty transformation takes place within him. He thinks soberly of himself and righteously of others. He feels his own unworthiness so deeply that he is not forward to urge his demands. And he is so sensible of the rights of others, and desirous to promote their interests, that he gives them a large place in his consideration. The result is the grace of gentleness. It is made up of modesty and justice. These constitute, in the highest and best sense of the word, the gentle man. And yet there is great dignity in such deportment, and power too. His gentleness has made him great. It was a prominent feature in the character of Christ. "He shall not lift up, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." He said Himself, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

6. Yet observe, farther, this gentleness is accompanied by another grace of much activity and usefulness. It is denominated goodness. We say God is good, because He dispenses His

favours to all the creatures of His hand. He made them, and preserves them, and supplies their wants, and is ever doing them good. "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain upon the just and unjust." And what an example did His Son set of this grace when He tabernacled on our earth! He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the sad. The same, then, is required of His followers. His Spirit conforms them to His character and ways. Under a deep sense of the goodness which they are continually receiving at His hand, they feel themselves constrained to exercise kindness to others. They feel that all they have is a talent entrusted to their use for the good of others. They go up the journey of life, dispensing the benefits that have been confided to their care. They see that all around the works of God are proclaiming this lesson. They look up to the heavens, and they give their rains and dews. They look on the earth, and it gives its precious fruits. They look to the sea, and it gives food for man. They look to the sun, and he gives light and heat; to the moon and the stars, and they guide the traveller by land and the voyager by sea. All proclaim that God has made everything to do good. These calls are irresistible. The Spirit impresses them on the heart. And so the lesson is effectually learned, "to do good and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

7. This goodness, however, is followed by another grace that presents the subject in a new light. It is faith. Goodness is the result of faith. Whenever that grace takes possession of the heart, it produces goodness in the life. It must be so in whatever aspect faith is contemplated. Is it faith in God Himself? Then if we believe Him to be what He is declared to be in the Scriptures, we must do His will, seeing we are accountable to Him as our Creator, and Redeemer, and Judge. Is it faith in His Son? Then if we feel we owe to Him our soul, and salvation, and all our hopes, we must be constrained to act in conformity with His character and requirements. Is it faith in His Word? Then as it reveals our duty, and enforces it by the solemn sanction of judgment and eternity, we must be stimulated to such a course as will find acceptance hereafter. Faith and fidelity are thus identified. A diligent employment of all we are and have for the glory of God and the good of man must spring

out of the principle of a living faith. It dwells in the heart, takes hold of all the passions and affections, engages the whole man, and stimulates all our powers in the service of God. It fills the understanding with light and the heart with love. Hence goodness and faith have always been associated. All the graces, indeed, run into one another, as do the colours of the rainbow. It is impossible to distinguish where the one begins and the others end. They are blended together, and compose one lovely spectacle. And so do the graces of the Spirit unite in the character of the servant of God.

8. This will appear still farther in the next that is mentioned, meekness. It resembles gentleness, but there is this difference, that while gentleness marks the deportment towards man, meekness distinguishes it towards God. Gentleness softens and refines the manners, but meekness subdues the will. It is thus seen in an uncomplaining submission to the will of God, whatever that may be. Jesus displayed it eminently, as He did every other grace. Under the agony of the garden He cried, "not my will, but thine be done." So "He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." And as He exemplified the grace, He requires it of us. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is the same that is commended by an Apostle, "as a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great prize." The commendation is just. Meekness is a noble triumph over the pride of the human heart and the obstinacy of the unsubdued will. And it is a blessed grace to its possessor. It causes him to pass easily through the trials and temptations that distress and injure those who are destitute of it. The willow bends beneath the storm and escapes unhurt, when the sturdy tree that stands against it is torn from its roots or rent in pieces. So, as in meekness we bow to the will of God we escape the sorrows and disasters of a vain and fruitless resistance. In the storm we hear a voice that assures us, "it is I, be not afraid."

9. To all these graces one other is added,—temperance; and, as the last, it occupies its proper place. Not because it is less important than the others, but because it is essential to them all. Not one of them can prosper without it. If there be intemperance in the use of the gifts of God, the whole character is bru-

talised. This is true of both eating and drinking. When these are indulged to excess, it is easy to trace the influence in counteracting, or destroying, or hindering the existence of the graces that have been considered. There cannot be love to God or man, but enmity to both, for the one is disobeyed and the other injured. There cannot be joy in God, for the thought of Him is painful, as He is dishonoured. There is no peace, for there is the ceaseless cry of discontent and dissension. There is not long-suffering, but irritation and ready provocation. Not gentleness, but rudeness. Not goodness, but selfishness. Not faith, but the evil heart of unbelief. Not meekness, but rebellion against God. Not a single grace can grow where intemperance is indulged. But temperance is the handmaid of them all. It serves the part of the fly-wheel in the machinery. It keeps all harmonious and pleasant. It leaves the mind and body free for healthy action. And where it is, and only there, can it be expected "the soul shall be in health and prosper."

In conclusion, let it never be forgotten that all the graces of which we have spoken are the fruit of the Spirit. Without Him they cannot be. He is their author; and whoever would have them must pray to Him for them. And as He must produce them, so He alone can cherish them. Their increase, no less than their existence, must be sought from Him. And wherever He is, they are. He will not dwell in any soul unaccompanied by them. They must all manifest His indwelling and influence. He is the Spirit of love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and faith, and meekness, and temperance. See that His presence is known by these outward manifestations. In Christ they were seen in all their beauty and fulness. And so must all who have His Spirit exhibit His graces.

The Sealing of the Spirit.

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."—*EPH. i. 13, 14.*



IN the passage of which the text is a part, the mind of the Apostle is seen to have been filled with adoring views of the grace of God in the blessings of redemption. At the 3rd verse he exclaims, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." He then recites these blessings. Electing love, "He hath chosen us in Him." Holiness, "that we should be holy." Adoption, "predestinated unto the adoption of children." Favour, "accepted in the beloved." Pardon, "forgiveness of sins." The final restoration of all things to order and righteousness, "that he might gather together in one all things in Christ." Then he adds the blessing of the text, "in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

In dwelling on these rich and precious words, we may notice,
 1. At what time the blessing mentioned is said to have been enjoyed—"after ye believed." 2. The blessing itself, "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." 3. The purpose served by such a blessing—"the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession," and 4. Its origin and end, "unto the praise of His glory."

1. The time when the blessing is said to have been enjoyed—"after that ye believed."

This circumstance is one of deep moment, and suggestive of some solemn truths.

It assumes that faith is an accomplished fact in the soul of him who has become the subject of it. Either we do believe or we do not believe. This seems to be a very simple and self-evident statement, yet practically it is either forgotten or perplexed in obscurity. Address the question of our Lord to the mass of men—"dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and how would it be regarded? Many would wonder at it. They had never thought of it. Or they had assumed it was a question to which no answer could be given. Or they had sometimes thought upon it, and found it impossible to resolve it. Others would be greatly perplexed by it. They have felt it is the question of questions. They have often resolved to entertain it in a way compatible with its importance. But they have not succeeded in doing so. The cares of this life have hindered them. They have lived in violation of their purposes, and in opposition to their highest interests. On all these it is important to press the consideration, that they are of necessity either in a state of unbelief or faith. They have believed to the saving of the soul, or they are in sin, and cannot please God. The exhortation therefore is urged upon them, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

This question ought to be decided under the solemn impression that until there is faith there is no salvation, but that wherever it is that great blessedness is secured. "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Without faith there can be no salvation, because it is the only way in which we can become partakers of it. If we would be nourished by food we must eat it, and in the same way if we would live by Christ we must receive Him by faith. And whenever we do so receive Him we are put in possession of salvation. It unites to Christ, and out of that union all blessings arise. We are pardoned, because we are cleansed in the blood that washes away all our sin. We are justified, because the work of Christ becomes ours and He is "the Lord our righteousness." We are renewed in heart, because His Spirit

dwelleth in us. For the same reason we are preserved in holiness. So also shall we be carried through death and the grave, and at last be translated to glory in heaven. "He of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." These are they, and they only, of whom the text speaks. Let us consider,

2. The blessing which they who have believed are said to enjoy. "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

It is important to bear in mind that while only they who have believed are said to possess this blessing, all who have done so are supposed to have attained to it. It belongs to them peculiarly, and none others have it, but to them universally, and none of them are deprived of it. What then is it?

A seal is used for the double purpose of assurance and security. A legal document is signed and sealed in order to declare that what it contains is true, and that what it engages shall be made good. And if the use of the term in the Scriptures is observed, it will be found in accordance with these views. John the Baptist said of Christ, "he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." He has declared in the most solemn and decided manner in which it is possible for him to do so, that the revelation of the divine will in the person and ministry of Christ, is undoubtedly true. Our Lord said of Himself, "Him hath God the Father sealed." By an audible voice from heaven, by the miracles which He enabled Him to perform, by the life which He lived in full accordance with ancient prophecy, and by what He enabled others to do in His name, God gave unequivocal proof of the divine mission and authority of the Son. So, also, we read of believers, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads." And of the same persons it is added, "A lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Thus the truth was sealed when it was indubitably witnessed, and men were assured it would be made good. The Saviour, the grand subject of it, was sealed, when He was incontestibly shown to be "the way, the truth, and the life." And they who believed in Him were sealed when they were declared to be His, and assurance was given to them and all men that, without fail, they would be brought through all difficulties and trials, to the full

and final enjoyment of all that had been provided and promised them in Christ Jesus. In the case of the truth the seal was the distinct testimony borne to it. In the case of the Saviour, the seal was the testimony of God himself. And in the case of believers the seal is the divine testimony borne to them and for them—to them, for their own satisfaction and encouragement, and for them, that others may know they are the people whom God hath blessed. In what, then, does it consist? And how is it to be observed by ourselves and others?

An expression has already been quoted, that is well fitted to explain it. When believers were said to have been sealed, they were declared to have had their Father's name written in their foreheads. The seal, therefore, is interpreted of their Father's name legibly written upon them. It was on their foreheads, where all might see it, and none need mistake whose and what they were. What, then, is their Father's name? It is the character of God. This name means His perfections. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." They who are acquainted with the perfections of God will see where they may repose their confidence. To bear the name of God, therefore, is to be like Him. And in what respects this conformity is to be sought and found is fully explained in the divine Word. When man was first created, it is said God pronounced, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But it is more to our purpose to notice the account that is given of the new creation in righteousness which takes place in the sinner when he is made a child of God. In one place it is described, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In another place, the words are, "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Uniting the two passages, the new man born after the image of God is represented to resemble Him in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. This is the image of God. This is His name. This is the seal that is written on the foreheads of His people. They are made like Him in knowledge—seeing as He sees, and judging as He judges; in righteousness—imbued with the pure and heavenly principles that form and govern His character; and in true holiness—imitating His example in the conduct of life, and seeking to be "perfect, even as their Father who is in heaven is perfect."

This view is abundantly confirmed by the peculiar language of the text. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The work is ascribed specially to the Spirit. He it is who has it for His office to write the name of God on the foreheads of His people. From the author of the work we may judge what the work itself must be. The very terms are full of meaning. He is called "the Holy Spirit of promise." In His nature and office there is a sure index to the character of His operation in the human mind. His nature is holy. He hates sin. He cannot look upon it without abhorrence. He loves purity, and He implants it wherever He dwells. As for His office, it is to do all that Christ promised He should be sent to accomplish. "When He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment." "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth in you, and shall be with you." "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." Now, only let these promises be verified, and what is the result? The seal thus impressed on the heart may be known and read of all men. It will be a deep and humbling sense of sin issuing in genuine repentance. It will be a clear perception of the nature and claims of righteousness and of careful conformity to its principles and demands. It will be a deep and solemn impression of the judgment which God passes on us now, and shall at last proclaim before assembled worlds. It will be a delight in the truth as it is in Christ, and a cheerful submission to its authority. It will be an ardent desire to honour Christ ourselves and to lead others to glorify Him with us. It will be, in a word, the impression which the truth makes, in answer to the prayer, "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Or more strictly, it will be the Spirit Himself, reflecting His own image in the soul in which He dwells. He is the Spirit of light, and diffuses it wherever He is. He is the Spirit of life, and imparts it wherever He dwells. He is the Spirit of love, and sheds it abroad in the regenerated heart. He is the Spirit of power, and strengthens with might in the inner man to resist temptation and make faithful in every duty. He is the Spirit of holiness, and induces men to be holy even as He is holy. This is the seal

which the Spirit writes on the foreheads of them that believe. It is what was found on the ancient high-priest—"holiness unto the Lord." And wherever it is, but nowhere else, is the text verified—"after that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Thus interpreted we are prepared to observe—

3. The purpose declared in the text to be served by such a blessing—"it is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

The present blessedness of those who are sealed by the Spirit is great, but it is to be regarded as no more than the commencement of that which is far higher and better. This is the sentiment presented to us in the words now to be considered. And it is presented in great fulness and force. It is an earnest—an earnest of our inheritance—an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. We must try and enter into these views.

The seal of the Spirit is an earnest. By an earnest we understand among men payment in part now, and a pledge of payment in full at a future time. It is the same in kind but not in degree. And this gives us a most instructive view of the present privileges and future prospects of the believer. They consist essentially and substantially in the same blessings. They are constituted of the work of the Spirit—begun on earth and consummated in heaven. Hence the Apostle John unites them thus—"now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." At present, we are sons, born of the Spirit. It must be confessed we seldom advance beyond being babes in Christ. Some, indeed, have grown to be young men. And there are also fathers in Christ, who have risen beyond their fellows in maturity and experience. But alas! the majority of believers need to be exhorted, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection." To all, however, who are sons, there is a bright prospect in the future. The Apostle represents it to consist in two things, the perfect knowledge of Christ, and full conformity to Him. "We shall see Him as He is," by sight and not by faith. So "we shall be like Him," for we shall be so captivated with His beauty as to be satisfied only with entire conformity to His

character and will. Let none, therefore, be deceived. If the work of grace is not begun here, it can never be perfected in the glory of heaven. But let none be discouraged. If it is begun here it is sure to be perfected hereafter. The Holy Spirit is given as an earnest to them that have believed.

Of what is it an earnest? In the text it is said to be that of "an inheritance." The term is used because we associate with it many thoughts that endear it to us. It is something very valuable and yet secure. And it is truly interesting to see how the Apostle Peter presents the subject under this twofold aspect, saying, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Here truly is that which is valuable, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It consists of that which is indestructible, because it is pure, and so shall be eternally satisfying. And it is as secure as it is valuable. It is "reserved in heaven." Who, then, can break through and steal? And it is laid up there for those who are kept for it, as it is kept for them. Already it is beyond the reach of the invader, and soon shall they be so too. In the meantime, they have the earnest of the inheritance.

This is to continue so "until the redemption of the purchased possession." The possession is already purchased. So said Jesus as He was about to depart from earth. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The redemption will be fully accomplished when that promise is made good. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

In such a prospect, how unspeakable is the privilege to have the earnest of the Spirit? It sustains under all difficulties. It animates in all duties. It comforts under all sorrows. It enables us to verify the truth, that "we are saved by hope." And, even

now, it puts the triumph into the believer's mouth, "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

4. We need only notice in the last place the origin and end of this redemption, "unto the praise of His glory."

Touching it, we may truly say, "all things are of God." He devised it, executed it, applies it, and completes it. He begins the work in the heart, maintains it, and will bring it to perfection. This may well recommend the apostle's counsel, "he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

It teaches us to glory only in Him. "What have we that we have not received?" Let us cherish a deep and abiding sense of entire dependence. Christ says, "without Me ye can do nothing." Let us believe Him, and act upon His words.

It teaches us we *may* glory in Him. All we need is provided for us. The blessings of grace are abundant here. They are at once full and free. We may possess them now, and enjoy in them the earnest of glory hereafter. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

It teaches us we *ought* to glory in Him. It is a duty we owe to God. He has said, "this people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise." They are to glorify Him now on earth through grace, and hereafter in heaven. It is expressly written, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe." And both views are included in the text, "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

XI.

The Unity of the Spirit.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—EPH. iv. 3.



IN the concluding verses of the second chapter of this epistle, the Church is thus described, “ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This description is appropriately followed by an exhortation, thus begun in the opening of the third chapter, “for this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, for you Gentiles,” but interrupted by a discussion which continues to the end of that chapter, and then resumed in the beginning of the fourth, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This is the connection in which the duty of the text is commended to our attention. It is enjoined as naturally, and necessarily growing out of the very nature of the Christian Church. Let us thus so consider it—inquiring, 1. what we are to understand by the unity of the Spirit—and 2. enforcing the duty arising out of it, “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

I. The unity of the Spirit. What is it? It need scarcely be said it is that unity which the Spirit produces and requires in the Church, of which we are to treat. He gives unity of sentiment, of feeling, and of action. “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul; neither said any of them

that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common." There is, however, a very minute description of the unity of the Church immediately added to the text, which is greatly better than any general account of it which it would be possible for us to give. It is in these words, "there is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Let us enter somewhat into the particulars of this inspired representation of the unity of the Church.

1. "There is one body." It is common to describe the Church, in the Scriptures, under the figure of the human body. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." All are united to a common head, and so to one another. There is thus all the sympathy arising out of a common interest in the same source of influence and authority, as well as of dependence on one another. The apostle has well said—"now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." The lowly are dependent on the exalted, and the exalted on the lowly. The master needs the servant, as the servant needs the master. What affects one, therefore, ought to be felt by all. Hence says the apostle beautifully—"whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Only let this one view be cherished, and it will alike explain and endear the unity of the Church.

2. "There is one Spirit." The Holy Spirit is meant. As one soul animates, guides, and governs the body, so does the Spirit the Church. This figure gives a most forcible idea of the unity that should pervade it. In the human body it is the soul that guides the eye to the objects which it shall behold, that directs the hands in the occupations which engage them, that controls the feet in the paths which they shall pursue. The whole body is subject to the presiding spirit. So also is it in the Church. The Holy Ghost is the living power that controls it. This is true of each member of the Church, and of the whole united Church. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and

that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And what unity should hence arise! Surely the members of the Church should see eye to eye. "No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Surely they should be bound heart to heart, crying with one voice, "grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Surely they should labour harmoniously together in the one great cause of extending the dominion of Christ over themselves and others—"standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

3. One hope. "Ye are called in one hope of your calling." This is what the apostle elsewhere describes as "Christ in you the hope of glory." He means the final blessedness to which all who believe are looking forward. As it is cherished it elevates their minds. "Risen with Christ, they seek those things which are above." Their "conversation is in heaven." And its influence on their unity should be great. They are all looking for the same happy home. Even in the things of earth we see how a common hope unites the energies of all who entertain it. The ship's crew work vigorously together in the hope of the desired haven; and the heavier the storm, the more closely are they united. The tented field may display many colours, but in action all are one, that they may gain a common victory. The merchant-partners take earnest counsel, and put forth vigorous efforts that together they may realize the hope of gain. How then should they be united who are now taught to say in common "so shall we ever be with the Lord."

4. "One Lord." This is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has said to all His followers, "one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." As this is apprehended and obeyed, they are one in Him. His authority is paramount with each and all. Whatever He commands they feel they are bound to do. Whatever He forbids they own they must avoid. Whatever He appoints they hold themselves ready to observe. Not only so, they acknowledge no other master. He only has authority to command, or forbid, or institute. He is supreme and absolute. Only let just views prevail on the headship of Christ, and it will secure such unity as can arise from no other source. The servant obeys his master. The soldier obeys his commander. He

says to this one, "come, and he cometh; to that go, and he goeth; to another do this and he doeth it." And this very illustration called forth the commendation of Christ in the days of His earthly ministry. Let us remember His words, and be careful to act upon them, both as we regard His honour and our obligation and duty—"all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Lo, I am with you alway."

5. "One faith." There is one object of faith. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the language of every true believer is "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is one principle of faith. Its seat is in the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." This is the regulating power in every renewed soul. There is one rule of faith. It is the Word of God. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." There is one discovery of faith. It is the eternal world. It draws aside the veil that hides it from the view of the world, and, looking into it, its principles and motives are drawn from it. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "We look not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Only let such principles then be really understood, and embraced, and obeyed, and what must be the unity arising out of them? The Apostle has well said, "that which was from the beginning, which we have seen, and heard, and looked upon, of the word of life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And well might another Apostle exhort, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

6. "One baptism." It may be understood of both the sign and the thing signified. All the members of the church are baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "Then they make a common profession. They own alike their depravity that needs to be cleansed, the efficacy of

atonement blood that "cleanseth from all sin," the work of the Spirit, who by it purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and the unity of the Godhead, both essentially and economically—three persons, but one God, and these united to save the sinner. This is a blessed profession, but there is more than a profession in the baptism of the Spirit. It is not only by water, but by fire. It is applied not merely to the person but to the conscience. It is with power. The thing signified is conveyed where the Spirit accompanies the ordinance. It may thus be said, "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Thus, all who have been made partakers of this baptism are united to one another, not only outwardly but inwardly, not merely professedly but really. Their hearts, as well as their words, are one through the grace of the Spirit.

7. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." The church is a family. Its members are all born of God. "Except a man be born of God, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Those also who, in the proper sense, are members of the Church of Christ are united to one another as the children of a common parent. They are nourished at the same breast, fed by the same hand, guided by the same counsel, protected by the same power, sheltered under the same roof. The measure of their love to their common parent will be that of their affection for one another. They are ever under the same influence, and prompted by the same grace. Is it fanciful to suppose there is a reference in the words before us to the constant and pervading influence of the persons of the Godhead in the hearts of them that believe?" One God and Father of all, who is above all—the supreme and everlasting Father, who is the fountain of all authority and power—"through all"—the Son who dwelleth in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, whose eyes are as a flame of fire beholding all hearts and actions, and whose grace is made sufficient for each and all—"and in you all"—the Holy Ghost who abideth in His people as His own chosen temple. Whether this be a fanciful interpretation or not, the truth is undoubted that the united agency and energy of the Spirit are employed to bind the members of the church in the unity of brethren.

Such, then, is the inspired description of the unity of the

Spirit as it is seen in His greatest work, the church of Christ. Is it not complete? What feature of genuine unity is wanted? Nothing ought to be taken from it, and nothing needs to be added to it. We shall rest in its views, and proceed to consider—

II. The duty arising out of it, “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” There is much instruction in the very manner in which this duty is inculcated, and it is well to observe it.

It is implied that an effort needs to be made to keep the unity of the Spirit. Alas! this needs no proof. As we consider the nature and elements of this unity, we might suppose it could not but be cherished in the church. But when we come to the actual observation of life, we find it to be far otherwise. Divisions and distractions and confusions have prevailed from the beginning. The great hindrance to the spread of religion in the world has ever been the contention that has weakened and occupied the energy of the church. No age or church has been an exception.

While, however, it is implied that an effort needs to be made for the unity of the Spirit, it is no less assumed that it ought to be made. The duty does not become less, but more imperative, because of its difficulty. We must endeavour to bind the Church together in a bond of peace.

How, then, is this duty to be done? As we have followed the counsel of the Apostle in the description of unity, so also are we favoured with his view of the manner in which it may best be maintained. He thus unfolds it in the verse preceding the text, “with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” He names four graces, by the exercise of which the unity of the Spirit may be maintained. Let us then notice them separately.

1. Lowliness. This is properly laid as the foundation of all. It means humility, such as ought to spring out of a just knowledge of ourselves. It is self-evident that it is the want of this grace which chiefly causes the contentions that prevail in the Church. The reference of the Scriptures to it therefore is very frequent. “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than them-

selves." "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." "All of you be subject one to another, and be ye clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." It is easy to see the operation of pride and its tendency to contention. "A man thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think." The consequence is that he expects more from others than he ought to expect. He looks for a measure of deference and attention to which he is not entitled. At the same time he thinks too little of others, of their attainments and claims, for just as his own excellencies are magnified, those of others are diminished. Whenever therefore they come into collision, there are elements of resistance which burst out in violence, and the unity of the Spirit is broken. It is a solemn duty to cultivate humility. Be assured we cannot lie too low before God, and if we look at ourselves in His sight, there will be little disposition to lift ourselves up proudly before others.

2. Meekness is allied with lowliness. It is the opposite of self-will. Toward God it is seen in a ready submission to His will, when it is contrary to our own. Toward men it is exercised in abstaining from a forcible intrusion of our views and desires in opposition to those of others. It is not incompatible with either firmness or zeal. We may tenaciously hold our sentiments, and earnestly press them on others. But it may all the time be done as the Apostle counsels—"in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." We may persuade but we cannot compel. As we proceed in this spirit our language will be respectful and our actions inoffensive. So also are we most likely to be successful. But even should we not prevail upon others, we shall have the satisfaction of not violating the unity of the Spirit.

3. Long-suffering is added. It is not enough that we do not give offence, we must not take it. Not only must we abstain from injuring or wounding others, but we must bear patiently the injuries they inflict upon us. They may speak evil of us, they may do evil to us, but our duty is forbearance. This is a noble spirit. Alas, it is a rare attainment. It is in Christ it is seen in perfection. But His servants have fallen far below this standard. Let us remember two are necessary to make a

quarrel, and let us refuse to be one. So we shall reach the highest dignity on earth, and keep the unity of the Spirit.

4. This may be done by following the last counsel of the Apostle, "forbearing one another in love." Love is the fountain out of which forbearance must be drawn. This may be seen constantly in the relations of life. How much and how long will a parent bear with a child, because he loves him? Much is overlooked, much is excused, and much forgiven. It is so in the Church. "Charity covers a multitude of sins." If the heart loves, the eye is not keen to detect, nor the hand ready to punish offences. Let brotherly love abound, and forbearance will not soon be exhausted.

Such is the Apostle's counsel for the promotion of unity. It will be secured by humility, meekness, long-suffering, and love. So let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.


The evils that arise out of the want of it should urge us to do so. It is hurtful to ourselves, ruinous to others, and discreditable to religion. It is a principal cause of the want of advancement of piety and godliness within the Church, and of the extension of its principles and practices in the world. If there be not unity, there cannot be prosperity.

On the other hand, the blessings that arise out of it should encourage us to cherish it. Remember the sweet words of the Psalmist, "behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Psalm cxxxiii. 1-3. Remember the earnest cry of the Lord¹ Jesus to his heavenly Father—"I pray that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." "Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

XII.

Grieving the Spirit.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."—EPH. iv. 30.

HE ascription of grief to the Spirit is an assumption of His personality. Grief is an affection which does not belong to an attribute, but can be exercised only by a person. And this incidental proof of a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel is as strong as a direct assertion or exposition of it. Its truth is taken for granted.

The nature of this passion is well understood by all from the universal experience of it. Grief is a portion of the inheritance of humanity. It is alike common to infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, and age. None need to have it explained. Every heart knows its own bitterness.

When grief is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, it is in accommodation to the weakness of our minds and the poverty of our language. Strictly speaking, He is incapable of grief. It is a painful emotion, and He is not susceptible of pain. When it is ascribed to Him, it is to teach us that, as we grieve over that which is contrary to our desire, so there are actions contrary to the will of the Spirit, distasteful to Him, and which He regards with aversion, and will treat accordingly.

Instead, however, of dwelling on the nature of the affection, either in the Spirit or in ourselves, our great concern is to ascertain what that is by which the Spirit is grieved, that we may avoid it. Nor is it difficult to obtain this knowledge. It is implied in the character given to the Spirit in the text—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." He is grieved by everything that is contrary to holiness. He is holy Himself, and He demands holiness in all intelligent beings. His command is, "As He

which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy. Wherever this holiness is not rendered, the Spirit is grieved.

In the context, the Apostle goes with great minuteness into the sins by which the Spirit is specially grieved. Both before and after pronouncing the text, he dwells upon them in a tone of great earnestness and faithfulness. Nor will it be possible for us to pursue any course of illustration so satisfactory as noticing separately the several sins against which the Apostle warns us as those by which the Spirit is grieved.

Before proceeding to do so, however, one thing deserves to be remarked. In the whole of the enumeration, the Apostle not merely denounces the sin, but demands the opposite duty. He goes on the divine principle, that while we "cease to do evil, we must learn to do well." Not only must we abstain from that which is wrong, but do that which is right. This treatment of the subject will be apparent while we proceed with the examples cited by the Apostle. But first another remark.

In laying down the principles of holiness, by which alone it can ever be secured, he pursues the same course. He says at the 22d verse, "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." This is essential and fundamental, but it is not sufficient. He therefore adds, "and be renewed in the spirit of your minds ; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is assumed that on no basis besides this entire transformation can a life of holiness be laid. Even where that great and gracious change has been effected, there is required the utmost watchfulness that the superstructure of true holiness may be securely and successfully raised. It is, indeed, after the foundation has been laid, the duty required in the text comes specially into exercise. It is on those who have put off the old man and put on the new man it is enjoined, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." They may do so. They are continually tempted to do so. A child grieves a parent by his misconduct. It is the very circumstance of his being a child, tenderly beloved and cared for, that makes his disobedience painful beyond measure. And so it is with the people of God and the Spirit of God. They are His children. They have been born of the Spirit. He is deeply concerned in their purity and prosperity. He knows

these two can never be separated. He, therefore, faithfully warns and tenderly entreats them. With all the affection of a Father, he tells them what to avoid and what to do, and beseeches, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

1. His first counsel is in the 25th verse, and respects falsehood and truth. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another."

The Holy Spirit is eminently the Spirit of Truth. He has revealed the truth of God to men. He opens the mind to receive it. He brings the heart under its power. And He demands the observance of it in all the conduct. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts ; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

In harmony with these views, the judgments of the Spirit have ever been the most marked against the want of truth, either the suppression of it or the violation of it. When Jonah refused to go to Nineveh and proclaim the truth of God against its guilty inhabitants, we know what befell him. When any ancient prophet withheld the commission with which he was entrusted, he was sure to bring down the displeasure of God. Particularly is the violation of truth hateful to the Spirit. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. It is not to be overlooked that their sin is regarded as having been specially an offence against the Spirit. "Ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." And you do not need to be told how He visited their sin. "Satan hath filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ; thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the Ghost." So also it befell Sapphira. No wonder it is added, "Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things."

It is precisely thus we might expect falsehood to be regarded by the Holy Spirit. It is in itself contrary to the nature and character and law and government of God. It is essentially destructive of the purity and peace and prosperity of society. It is invested with a spirit of meanness and degradation utterly unworthy of a rational and accountable moral agent. Wherever it prevails there can be no righteous principle. It is, therefore, inimical to the Spirit and intolerable to His purity.

Great care ought to be exercised by the believer in the cultivation of truth. The exhortation of Christ is deserving of his

most marked consideration. "Let your communication be yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Simplicity and godly sincerity should be the features of our conversation. Strong assertions are apt to be exaggerated statements. We are furnished with a noble example in the style of the Scriptures, especially in the discourses of our Lord. Facts are stated, but usually comments are avoided. Let us speak, under the consciousness that the Holy Spirit heareth us. Then truly we shall "put away lying, and speak every man truth to his neighbour—feeling we are members one of another."

2. The next example cited by the Apostle is in the 26th and 27th verses—"be ye angry and sin not ; let not the sun go down upon your wrath ; neither give place to the Devil."

The scriptures are ever wise and reasonable. They remind us here that there is a sense in which anger is justifiable. It is said of Christ, on one occasion, "He looked upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." We ought to be angry with sin, and we may be angry with those who commit it, as violaters of the divine law.

This is admitted. Yet the warning before us assumes the extreme danger of this passion. It is difficult to direct it exclusively against the sin, or against the sinner, simply as a violater of the divine law. Other views and feelings are prone to mingle in this passion. It is difficult to restrain it within proper bounds, and direct it either in a right spirit, or against the right object. It is apt to be excessive and unreasonable and to expose ourselves and others to much evil.

How sad is its effect upon ourselves. It blinds the mind. It wounds the conscience. It corrupts the heart. It perverts the will. It misdirects the conduct. It withdraws us from the government of reason, and makes us the sport of unbridled passions. Of it James speaks when he says of the tongue as its ready instrument—"the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity ; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell."

On others its effects are equally disastrous. It provokes them to the indulgence of similar passions. It produces breaches which it is hard to heal. It leaves a canker in the memory which no time can eradicate. And it excites to reprisals for revenge and triumph.

Two considerations are, therefore, suggested by the Apostle, well fitted to warn us against anger.

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” This is one. Do not cherish it. Never sleep upon it. Ere you commit yourself to that bed which may prove to be your grave, see that it is removed from your mind. The thought of death and judgment and eternity is surely sufficient to overcome it. If it is allowed to remain it will gain the mastery. And woe to the man in whom it has dominion.

The other suggestion is still more alarming.

“Neither give place to the Devil.” It is a grand instrument for his purposes. He employs it constantly. By it he gains access to minds that otherwise are closed against him. Look at Moses himself, the meekest man on earth, yet thus overcome at the waters of Meribah. Look at Paul and Barnabas, and the contention that separated them. Such examples are recorded for our admonition. They show the dangers to which the most godly are exposed. And they powerfully warn us that we must be watchful against anger as we would not grieve the Spirit.

3. The third illustration of the Apostle is in the 28th verse. “Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands, the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

It may be asked can it possibly be necessary to warn the believer against such a crime as is here named, stealing? Our answer is, there is no sin, short of that against the Holy Ghost, into which he may not be betrayed by the force of temptation. The history of the godly is abundant proof of this observation. Remember Abraham and Lot and David and Peter. Their deception and impurity and falsehood are recorded as so many beacons to warn us against making shipwreck of the faith.

At the same time the contrast in the verse before us is very instructive. While it warns us against stealing it requires of us diligence.

We are thus reminded there are many subtle forms in which the sin denounced may be committed, while in its grossness it may be detested and avoided. A man may scorn to put forth his hand and take the property of another who yet may be a violater of the eighth commandment. An upright and honourable merchant—as the world counts him—may yet conduct his business

in a way that is not rendering justice but inflicting injury on others. A master may deprive his servant of privileges that righteously belong to him. Or, a servant may waste the time of his master, while he would not steal his property. We need to be watchful.

If we would be so, we are here taught how to be successful. It is to cultivate the habit of diligence. By this means temptation is reduced in more ways than one. Occupation shuts it out on the one hand, and the abundance which is provided renders it weaker on the other. It was while David indulged his ease he was tempted to the sin that dishonoured his name, and issued in cruelty and injustice to others.

Especially if diligence is conducted on the high principle, and with the holy object recommended by the Apostle, it will be effectual. "Let him labour, that he may have to give to him that needeth." The motive will purify his pursuits. His toils are undergone for the sake of others, as well as for himself. In such a case, the man is elevated to a high and holy atmosphere. He breathes the pure air of heaven itself. He has fellowship with the Spirit. Instead of grieving he cherishes Him. He lives in the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, and is led by the Spirit.

4. The Apostle gives his counsel on the subject of our ordinary conversation. Thus in the 29th verse, he says, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

On the one hand, there must be no corrupt communication. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." They are injurious alike to ourselves and others. There are many forms too in which they may prevail besides that of impure and gross improprieties. Let the conversation be merely trifling, and the effect is serious. Time is wasted, opportunities are lost, the mental powers are weakened, the moral powers are reduced, and both our own condition and that of others is injured. Or suppose a higher criminality. A word is spoken detrimental to truth or godliness. It may remain in the memory for days or years to come. It may rise up to weaken our purposes, and tempt us to unfaithfulness or sin, at the very time when we should be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man." Like David, therefore, we need to set a watch upon our lips that we

may not sin with our tongues. "No corrupt communication should ever proceed out of our mouth."

But this is not enough. There should proceed from it that which is good. We are bound to speak for the use of edifying. In our common conversation we should seek to be the ministers of grace unto the hearers. It is amazing how mighty has sometimes been the influence of a word. "A word fitly spoken, how good it is." It has relieved the burthened mind. It has guided the perplexed conscience. It has restrained the purposed evil. It has stimulated to holy enterprises. This is a mighty instrument which God has put into our hands. We can carry it with us wherever we go. It scatters blessings on others, and reflects them on ourselves. Let us use it, remembering the word of the Lord Jesus, "for every idle word men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

5. One other illustration is given by the Apostle. It follows the text, at the 31st verse, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The evils enumerated are all forms of one sin, an ungoverned spirit. It may appear in the bitterness of the feelings that are indulged, or the words that are spoken. It may assume the form of wrath when that bitterness is allowed to culminate in the storm of indignation. Or it may settle down in the habit of indulged anger. Or it may find vent in noisy clamour. Or it may express itself in the gratification of evil speaking. Or it may issue in determined malice. The Apostle seems to represent the same state of mind of which our Lord speaks when He warns us, "whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." It need not be said how offensive all such passions are to the Holy Spirit, and how He must be grieved by them.

Instead of them, let us carefully notice what He approves, and with what He will hold fellowship. "Kindness." It is to be expressed in our spirit, our words, and our actions. "Tender-

hearted." It is seen in the pain which is felt in the sufferings of others, and the sympathy that is awakened by their appeals. "Forgiveness." It must be a habit, a pleasure. And all these, especially the last, must be on the model of Jesus Christ, and for His sake. Wherever they are the Spirit dwells. There He finds a home and a habitation. This is assumed in the whole passage. And He may be understood to say, "come out from among these impurities, and cultivate these graces, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters."

In conclusion, there is a solemn motive implied in the text why we should beware of grieving the Spirit. It is assumed if we do so we cannot enjoy His presence and communion. It is recorded of Samuel, "he came no more to see Saul; nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." It is so with the Spirit and those who grieve Him. He withholds from them His quickening influence. Their hearts are cold, and their services dull, languid, and formal. He withholds His comforting influence. They are deprived of enjoyment in God and His service. He withholds His enlightening influence. They walk in darkness and can see no light. He withholds His sustaining influence. They have not power to resist temptation as once they did, or to be faithful and successful in duty as once they were. He visits them with tokens of His displeasure. "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit; wherefore He turned to be their enemy, and fought against them." Let us be admonished by the history of Saul. See him calling for Samuel at the hands of a wizard. He cries, "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams." Let us be thankful it is another spirit with whom we have to deal. We may return and enjoy the communion of the Spirit. But it is better to obey the counsel, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

XIII.

The Holy Scriptures the Work of the Spirit.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”—2 TIM. iii. 16.



THE Holy Scriptures are ascribed, in the text, to the special work of the divine Spirit. It is true He is not named, but the term employed is descriptive of His operation. Inspiration is at once recognized to proceed immediately from Him. The quotation of two passages from the book of Job will both illustrate and confirm these remarks. In the 32d chapter, at the 8th verse, it is written, “there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.” And again in the 33d chapter, at the 4th verse, we read, “the Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” The “inspiration of the Almighty,” and “the Spirit of God” are identified. When, therefore, it is said, “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” it is the same as if it had been announced, “all Scripture hath proceeded from the Spirit of God.” On this ground we assume that the holy Scriptures are the special work of the Spirit. And we proceed to the consideration of this important subject.

There are four questions within which it may be profitably contemplated. 1. What are we to understand by the inspiration of the Spirit? 2. What is inspired? 3. What are the evidences of the inspiration of the holy Scriptures? And 4. What are the ends to be served by this work of the Spirit? May the Spirit enlighten us on these weighty themes!

I. What are we to understand by the inspiration of the Spirit?

It has been remarked on the word that is rendered inspiration that it properly means God-inspired. The idea of breathing upon, or breathing into the soul, is that which the word naturally conveys. Thus God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life; and thus the Saviour breathed on the disciples and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost." The idea seems to have been that the life was in the breath, and that an intelligent spirit was communicated with the breath. This is a just representation, and gives us a correct idea of the inspiration of the Scriptures. As God breathed an intelligent spirit into the lifeless body of Adam, so He breathed intelligence into the minds of the sacred writers, such as they had not before, any more than the body of Adam had not life until the Spirit breathed into it. What they wrote, therefore, they conceived and expressed under the immediate teaching and influence of the Spirit.

This is precisely the view that is repeated by the apostle in the text. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Let it be observed His assertion respects the writing, and not merely the writer. It is the thing written which He declares to have been inspired. That was breathed into his mind as much as Adam's soul was breathed into his body. "All Scripture" is said to have been so produced. Whatever was written under the guidance of the Spirit was thus produced by Him wholly and entirely. It did not belong partly to the Spirit, and partly to him whom the Spirit employed. It was in the strictest and fullest sense the work of the Spirit. The writer was simply His instrument in the production of the writing. It is true the canon of Scripture was not complete when the apostle used these words. The Old Testament existed. So also did some portions of the New. Of all these the apostle spoke. But he did more. He laid down the characteristic distinction of all writings of the same class. Whatever was to be written, and to be added to the sacred writings, must be of the same nature as those which had already proceeded from the Spirit. Although therefore historically, the remark of the text could be applied only to the writings which existed when it was pronounced; yet, doctrinally, it applies as well to the whole canon of Scripture, including the completed New Testament no less than the Old. Of the whole sacred volume, this is the peculiar and distinguishing feature, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

If we enlarge our inquiries we shall find the same view is given in all the Scriptures. Everywhere their inspiration is regarded as the exclusive and complete work of the Spirit. In 2 Sam. xxxiii. 2, David says, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." Nehemiah says, chapter ix. 20, "thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in the prophets." Peter says, in Acts i. 16, "this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Jesus." Paul says, in Acts xxviii. 25, "well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet, unto our fathers." He calls the Scriptures, in Rom. iii. 2, "the oracles of God." In 1 Cor. ii. 16, he says of his own revelations—"which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." In Heb. iii. 7, he writes, "wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." And Peter says, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In the light of these Scriptures let it be determined what we are to understand by their inspiration. There can be no doubt they claim to be the dictates of the Spirit in the highest and the fullest sense. They assert this to be true alike of the sentiments imparted and the words in which they are conveyed. Indeed, if they are perfect, it must be so. Our words modify our thoughts. If a truth be inaccurately expressed, it is misrepresented. Perfect words are necessary to an unerring testimony, as well as to infallible sentiments. And unless both these features are found in the Scriptures, it cannot correctly be said, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

This is the idea of the Scriptures that ought to possess the mind of all who read them. They should feel God is speaking to them in them. They should hear every utterance as if it proceeded directly from His mouth. There is no difference between one passage and another. One is not more or less inspired than another. All comes alike from Him who is infinite in wisdom, whether it be a truth or a fact which had been previously known, or is a discovery entirely new and unknown before. There are great varieties, indeed, in the style of the Scriptures. The Spirit spake by each writer in a way corresponding to his taste, or habit, or genius. But by it He spake as fully as by any other. His word is like his works. No two of them are in all respects the same, although their character is

uniform. So also in His word. He speaks by Moses and David, and Isaiah and Paul, and makes the mind of each the vehicle of His revelations in a manner suited to the writer, but the writing by every one of them is the work of the Spirit. It may be said of the Scriptures, in whole and in part, this is the word of God. There is no other consistent and satisfactory view of inspiration. It is not enough to say the Scriptures contain a revelation from God. The true theory is, they are a revelation from God. This is the character of every thing contained in them, and thus only do we rightly interpret the text, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

II. Carrying these views with us, we proceed to inquire, in the second place, what is inspired? What are those books for which this divine original and high character may be claimed?

We have no hesitation in replying they are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The evidence of their divine origin and continued purity is complete.

As to the Old Testament, it is known to all with what care the sacred books that compose it were preserved by the Jews. They reckoned the books, the verses, the syllables, and the letters. An error could not have been introduced without detection. They proved themselves to be faithful librarians of the divine word. It is observable that our Lord never charges them with having falsified the written word in a single instance. The great fact is established that Christ gave His sanction to the entire Old Testament as it existed in His day. This renders all argumentation unnecessary regarding its purity and authority. If Christ was satisfied, well may we be so. And as to the time that has since elapsed, the following statement may suffice:—A distinguished scholar, Dr. Kennicott, resolved to examine all the Hebrew manuscripts he could find, in order to determine the purity of the sacred text. In this work he spent ten years. £10,000 were subscribed to defray the expenses, he was patronised by seven crowned heads, he was aided by many learned men, and although he discovered many different readings, yet they were so insignificant as to call forth the following observation from Bishop Marsh, in his lectures at Cambridge:—"You will be ready, perhaps, with me, to say how many learned lives, and what a vast sum of money has thus been expended in compara-

ratively fruitless labour; for no controversy of importance either between Jews or Christians, or any of the sects into which they have been respectively divided, has been affected by them. No. It was worth all their lives and labours to know there was nothing to do." So far for the Old Testament.

As to the New, the question is one of pure history. What were the books acknowledged to be divine while the inspired Apostles lived? And having ascertained them, can we prove that they are those which we now acknowledge; and that they remain pure and entire as they were at first inspired by the Holy Ghost. To all these questions history gives a clear and unhesitating answer. It can be shown they were all regarded as sacred by the earliest Christian writers. They are uniformly cited by them as unquestionable authority in faith and practice. Very early they were collected into a volume, and catalogues given of them. They were publicly read in religious assemblies. Commentaries were written upon them. And it is specially to be noticed that the various sects into which the early Church was soon divided, all appealed to them alike. This evil was overruled for good in two ways. No sect could introduce as Scripture what had not been acknowledged from the beginning, for the attempt would have been instantly detected and exposed by an opposing one. And at the same time a security was thus provided for preserving the purity of the text. The whole contents of every book, as well as every book of the Scripture, were thus objects of the keenest observation. The result is, that the same conclusion has been arrived at respecting the New Testament, as had previously been adopted regarding the Old, that while many various readings have crept into the text, in the process of time, these are so trifling in their nature as not materially to affect any doctrine or duty taught and inculcated by the divine Word. There is historical evidence sufficient to satisfy every reasonable mind that to this hour we possess the Holy Scriptures pure and entire, as they came at first from the inspiration of the Spirit.

This is a wonderful contemplation. God has preserved His own book. It can be ascribed only to Him that it has not been perverted or destroyed. Its existence is a standing miracle. It has been burned and mutilated, and kings, and priests, and people have again and again conspired to destroy it. But their

purposes have been frustrated. And as far above their abortive efforts as the sun in the firmament, the Book of God has endured, as at first the Spirit wrote it, divine, pure, and uncorrupted.

III. Acknowledging its divine origin and preservation, we may now properly inquire what are the evidences of these sacred characteristics on which we may confidently rely? For its inspiration we have appealed to its own testimony. For the preservation of its purity we have appealed to history. But there is a farther question—How may we prove its divinity? What are the evidences that it has indeed proceeded from the inspiration of God? These are many, and can at present only be named.

1. They carry with them their own proof. A self-evidencing light attends them. We look out on the works of God, and we feel they proclaim their own author. So also do the Scriptures. Men could not have written them. They could as well have made the sun, or moon, or stars, or earth. What human mind could have conceived the Ten Commandments, or the life of Jesus Christ! They are as far above men as the heavens are above the earth. The book that contains them claims to be from God, and in no other way can its existence be explained.

2. The perfect harmony of all its parts strengthens this argument. Its writers stretch over a period of two thousand years. They were unknown to one another. They were in all varieties of situation, and had all the different influences of education to encounter; yet they never differ from one another. They teach one doctrine? Why so? Obviously because they were guided by one Spirit.

3. Many of them were enabled to perform undoubted miracles. These were admitted by those who witnessed them. They could not be gainsayed. By this exhibition of power, God gave man to know that His servants spoke by Him; and as they saw their works, they were required to believe their words.

4. Still more, they were enabled to utter the most clear and intelligible prophecies. Some of them were speedily accomplished. As the world grew older, this testimony became stronger. And still it continues. It will continue to the end. Thus the faith of the Church will be sustained and strengthened to the end. The history of the world is only the development of pro-

phesy. And, therefore, it is well called "a light shining in a dark place."

5. Better than this, every believer has a proof of the truth of the Word in his own experience. Hence prophecy is called "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." That is done when we receive the Word in the power and love of it. And any one who does so needs no other proof that it comes from God.

6. Yet we may add the happy and holy tendency of the Word in the world. So far as it is obeyed, purity, peace, and prosperity prevail. Were it universally obeyed, it would fill the world with holiness and happiness. No man having the Scriptures in his hand can look at the purpose they propose without acquiescing in this conclusion. And if some ask, From whom did they proceed? they say they came from God, and we may cordially acquiesce in their testimony.

IV. This argument, however, will be strengthened while we inquire, in the fourth place, what are the ends proposed to be served by the Book of God?

In replying to it, we need not go beyond the context. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

It is designed to be "profitable." It is not for speculation or amusement it is given. Its aim is usefulness. It has not served its purpose to us if it has not proved to be profitable.

"For doctrine." It enlightens the understanding. It gives correct views of God, and man, and sin, and salvation, and the soul, and time, and eternity. It teaches all we need to know and require to do.

"For reproof." It detects our sins. We are to look into it as a glass. There we may behold ourselves, our hearts, our lives, our motives, our actions. It is assumed, that every one who believes the word, will be convinced of sin.

"For correction." It does not leave the penitent in despair. It shows him a remedy. As it makes known the defilement, it points to a fountain of purification. To the convinced sinner, it proclaims the all-sufficient Saviour.

“For instruction in righteousness.” It takes the believer by the hand, and leads him along the path of life. It brings him from stage to stage in his journey, until at last he appears before God, perfect in Zion. It is never satisfied until the man of God is perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It furnishes him with counsel, and motive, and warning, and encouragement. In a word, the man that knows the Scriptures, is “made wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

These are the purposes of the divine word, and they are worthy of its inspiration, preservation, and divinity.

O! let us learn to say with David, “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand His errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

XIV.

Miracles the Work of the Spirit.

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will."—HEB. ii. 4.



HE miracles, by which God bears witness to the gospel of His Son, are ascribed specially to the operation of the Spirit. He testifies by "the signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

In like manner, the miracles performed by Christ, are attributed to the Spirit. He says, in allusion to a large class of them, "if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils," assuming it was by His special agency this miraculous work was accomplished. The testimony of Paul is explicit, as to the source of such power in any member of the Church, "to one is given by the Spirit the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles." From all this the conclusion is plain that the Spirit is the author of every exercise of miraculous power.

How it is that miracles become witnesses to the truth, may easily be understood. By performing them a man shows he is endowed with divine power. He appeals to them as a proof that he is commissioned by divine authority, and guided by divine wisdom. When Moses was sent to the children of Israel to announce himself their deliverer, he was furnished with the credentials of his mission in the miraculous rod that he bore in his hand. It is said this was done, "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers hath appeared unto thee."

In harmony with these views, men have ever looked for miracles among the credentials of a divine mission. The Egyptian sorcerers confronted Moses by attempting to perform his miracles. It is foretold, that the apostacy of the latter day would be dis-

tinguished by "lying wonders." The attempt at imposition is a proof that the evidence of miracles is satisfactory. It is taken for granted that where they are really performed we are prepared to be decided by the proof so furnished.

How thankful, then, should we be for those miracles which the Spirit has furnished for the truth of the Gospel! They possess every feature calculated to afford the utmost satisfaction. Your attention is solicited to the contemplation of the subject under this aspect. We shall then be constrained to own, as we examine the features of the Scripture miracles, that "God hath borne witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

1. In the first place, let us notice the *nature* of the miracles in question. They were such as did not admit of deception. They were facts presented to the senses, of which all might judge without danger of misapprehension. "Joshua said, in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed." All the people witnessed the miraculous interpositional, and it was impossible they could be deceived. They were too deeply concerned in the transactions of that memorable day to be imposed upon by any delusion. Especially in the miracles of the New Testament this feature is very marked. Water was turned into wine, and so used and tested. Thousands of hungry men were fed in the wilderness on a few loaves and fishes. The act of creating food was exhibited before them. Christ walked on the sea. He commanded the storm, and it subsided into a calm. He healed the sick. He rebuked the raging fever, and it departed. He raised the dead. Lazarus was restored after he had lain three days in the grave. These were facts palpable to the senses, about which there could be no mistake. Compare them with the pretensions of Rome, or the sickly imaginations of other deceived professors in our own time, and how great the contrast. In the one case, there is not a possibility of deception; in the other, it is more than conceivable. The subject of the false miracle is sure to be some devotee, ready to submit to any imposture, and it usually consists in restoration to comparative health from a condition of real or fancied weakness. The one is, indeed, the clumsy device of man, while the other is the work of God, known and read of all men.

2. In conjunction with the nature of the Scripture miracles, it

is important to observe their *variety*. The miracles of Moses were very different from those of Elijah or Elisha. The manna from heaven, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, as well as the plagues of Egypt, were wholly diverse from the widow's cruse of oil, or the iron hatchet, made to swim in the water, or the restoration of a dead child to life. It is in the miracles of Christ, however, this peculiarity is most conspicuous. "He went about all Galilee, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." It is clear the greater the variety the more full is the evidence of reality in the miracles. In themselves they were of all kinds, and they were practised on all kinds of persons. Deception and collusion were alike impossible. See how different it has ever been in lying wonders. The magicians of Egypt imitated some of the miracles of Moses, but as soon as these were varied, they were compelled to abandon the hopeless rivalry, and confess "this is the finger of God." A similar test will ever expose the imposture. Demand the variety of the Scripture miracles, and it cannot be found.

3. The *spirit* of these miracles is not less observable. They were eminently benevolent. It is true some of those under the Old Testament were full of judgment to the enemies of God's people, while they were wrought for their deliverance. This was in character with that dispensation, and in the nature of the case was unavoidable. How could Israel be delivered from the bondage of Egypt otherwise than by inflicting injury on their oppressors? The relief of the one involved the hurt of the other. Besides, the world needed to have these solemn lessons on the sovereignty, and holiness, and justice of God. But when we come to the New Testament, there is a marked change in the spirit of the economy. Nor is there anything in which this is more conspicuous than in the miracles of its great Author. They were all miracles of mercy as well as of power. They were usually performed in answer to the request of those who laboured under suffering, either in their own persons, or those of their friends. There is no example of any suppliant having been sent away empty. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the sad, restored the dead to life, diffused happiness wherever he went.

In nothing did He seek His own interest. He lived entirely for others. He had not where to lay His head. Were these the doings of an impostor? The benevolence that animated all the miracles of Christ, and which was inherited and imitated by His apostles is evidence of the source from which they emanated, and proves them to have been of that Spirit, who is eminently the Comforter.

4. In full harmony with this spirit, the *design* of these miracles was to commend to men the glorious gospel of the grace of God. How beautifully and forcibly is this sentiment expressed by our Lord when He announces the purpose of His ministry in these words, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." All the miracles that He performed by the Spirit, and all the qualifications with which He was thus divinely furnished, were designed to recommend the blessed truths He had to announce, and the invaluable blessings of which He wished them to be put in possession. They were all only means to these ends. What ends? That men might obtain the pardon of their sins. That they might be made holy in heart and in life. That they might be happy in the enjoyment of the divine favour, and the observance of the divine will. That they might be made useful in serving their day and generation upon the earth. And that when the present life was ended, they might be received to everlasting mansions, where is fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore. Every miracle was an argument to commend this dispensation to men, and make them possessors of its benefits. In themselves they were regarded as nothing, compared with the purposes which they were meant to serve. Is it possible that a system of imposture would be adopted to commend such an economy? That men would sin in order to make others holy? That they would deceive them with a view to advance their highest interests? That they would falsify for the purpose of making mankind happy? There is a sect, bearing the Christian name, who do adopt the principle of doing evil that good may come, who do not hesitate to deceive and falsify that they may allure men to embrace their principles. But one inspired Apostle has said of all such, in fearful denun-

ciation, "whose damnation is just." Christianity knows no such principle. It repudiates it. It is essentially the truth, in all its instructions, and practices, and purposes. It bears upon its forehead the mark of its Author. His name is there. It is an emanation from the God of truth. And the whole of its evidence is in harmony with its nature. Its design is to recommend Jesus to men that He may save them from their sins.

5. This last remark suggests another view of the miracles of Christ. They are both *illustrative* and *confirmatory* of His mission as the Saviour of men. It is most instructive and encouraging to observe how He Himself presents them in this view. In the beginning of the 9th chapter of the gospel by Matthew we have the following narrative. "They brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed ; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee? Or to say, arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house. And he arose and departed to his house." The lesson is obvious. The design of the miracle was to recommend the Saviour. The body was healed that the sufferer might be induced to seek the salvation of his soul. The power of Christ to command diseases was exhibited that men might trust in Him for pardon. One truth was made palpable to the eye, that another might be precious to the soul. The evidence of the miracle was intended at once to confirm and illustrate the power of Jesus to save. This applies to *Him*, while it does not apply to those who perform miracles in His name. He speaks with authority. He acts for and by Himself. He appeals to His miracle as a proof of His power to pardon. His apostles speak in His name, and act for and by Him. He and they together concur in the one blessed assurance that as His name is sufficient for the healing of the body, so also is it for the salvation of the soul. And while the miracles of the New Testament are read in this light, they are seen to be truly worthy of the Spirit from whom they proceeded.

6. We must not overlook the *witnesses* to these miracles. In them there was everything to satisfy as well as in the miracles themselves. They were both foes and friends. The most inimical and prejudiced beheld them, and yet they could not deny them. When Christ gave sight to the blind man whose case is recorded in the 9th chapter of John, the utmost ingenuity was used to turn aside the evidence thus furnished to His mission, but the miracle itself was not questioned. The Pharisees said to the man, "give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." They acknowledged the work, though they repudiated the man who performed it. On the other hand the friends of Christ gave their testimony in such a way as to render it irresistible. They endured all manner of afflictions rather than suppress it. "They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments." They were charged not to speak in the name of Jesus, but they had one answer, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They submitted to all forms of torture, and to death itself, before they would alter their testimony. They must then have been true men. It is inconceivable that they would have endured such things in order to deceive mankind. Nor is it less apparent that they could not have been deceived. They could say, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty." They were not retailers of what others had told them. "That which we have seen and heard, say they, declare we unto you." And it is to be added, they were facts, not opinions, to which they testified. They were not doubtful theories on which mistakes might be made. They were palpable facts about which there could be no misapprehension. They were moreover facts which, once proved, laid the foundation of the whole gospel. The resurrection was one. It was attested beyond denial. And when it was proved, in connexion with the claims of Christ, redemption was confirmed with it. To suppose, in such circumstances, that the Apostles were themselves deceived, or attempted to deceive others, would be to give credence to a greater miracle than any that are recorded in the New Testament.

7. We find, therefore, in the last place, that the *effect* of these miracles was such as might reasonably have been expected. They were universally believed by those who witnessed them. Even the prejudiced Scribes and Pharisees admitted them, while they

denied the conclusions that legitimately followed from them. As for the people, the idea of contradicting them never occurred to them. They would have gone much farther than the admission of the facts, had they not been unduly influenced by their religious teachers. These teachers feared the people, knowing their convictions. Had it not been for this unmistakeable symptom, they would have proceeded to extremities much sooner with our Lord and His Apostles. They were restrained only by fear. Over some they lost all influence. A goodly number not only admitted the facts, but followed them out to their legitimate consequences. They believed in Christ. As for His own ministry, it is said, "many believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did." And it is recorded of His Apostles—"they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following."

In conclusion, we must not omit to remind you of the solemn obligation to receive the gospel imposed by the miracles that attest it. This is the light in which the subject is placed in the context. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard Him?" We are held to be without excuse. More than this, our guilt is regarded as highly aggravated if, with such evidence for its truth, we do not receive the gospel of Christ. The evidence is greater than for any other facts in ancient history which no reasonable man disputes. We have not stronger proof that Julius Cæsar lived than we have for the truth of Christ's history, as it is declared in the gospels. If it is rejected it is not for want of evidence, but because of the depravity of the heart. The exhortation needs to be pondered, "take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." That is the true source of the evil, an evil heart. Our Lord distinctly ascribes the rejection of Himself to the love of sin. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They shall be treated accordingly. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Can we suppose they shall escape who obey not the gospel of His Son, when He has given all the evidence that should satisfy any reasonable mind of its truth? This is the lesson of the text—"God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

The Spirit the Author of Prophecy.

"Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—2 PETER i. 21.



PROPHECY is sometimes used generally to signify the preaching of the word. "He that prophesieth edifieth the church." At other times it is employed particularly to express the prediction of future events. It is in the latter acceptation it is to be understood in the text. This is plain from the context. In the 19th verse the term is used to denote the evidence furnished by prophecy, in contrast to that which is deduced from other sources, for the truth of the gospel. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." In the same sense we must understand the language of the 20th verse, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." The doctrine of the text therefore is that the Holy Ghost is the author or Spirit of Prophecy. And so we shall proceed to consider it. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

In entering on this subject it is important to notice the place assigned to prophecy among the evidences for the gospel. This subject is dwelt upon at length. In the 16th to the 18th verse the Apostle says, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." The Apostles were eye and ear witnesses of the majesty of Christ. They saw His glory in His

life and character and works, and heard the divine attestations that were borne to Him by God Himself. Strong, however, as this testimony is, it is affirmed that prophecy is still stronger. In the 19th verse it is written, "we have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." From the nature of prophecy it may be relied upon even more than ocular demonstration. There might possibly be some deception in the latter, but there could be none in the former. Yet the significant words are added, "until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." The evidences of sight and prophecy are both subservient to another and a better. This is the light and power of the truth in the heart. It is the experience of its salvation. Sight and prophecy are external, but this is internal. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Himself." This is an evidence which no sophistry can successfully assail. As well might it attempt to prove that the bread which we eat is neither good nor pleasant.

It is easy to see how the evidence arising out of prophecy is so strong as it is represented to be. The future is wholly unknown to man. If therefore one shall arise who can lift up the veil that hides it from our view, and disclose its coming events, it is clear he is possessed of more than human wisdom. Especially if he appeals to this prophetic vision as a proof that he is intrusted with a divine commission, we are bound to give attention to his claims. If he can show that the words which he has uttered have been verified we act unreasonably if we refuse attention to his counsels. And as the men of future times see his predictions more and more confirmed, so is the truth of his whole testimony to be more implicitly believed and obeyed. Such evidence is peculiar to divine revelation. There have been pretences to miracles, but it can scarcely be said there have been any to prophecy. The ancient oracles are the only approach to such presumption. They are too contemptible, however, to admit of any attention to their claims. Their responses were expressed in language of studied ambiguity, so that whatever the result might be they should not have the appearance of having been falsified. With the scriptures and their prophets it is altogether different. They are plain and certain. And it will be our object in the sequel of this discourse to unfold some of the leading features of the scripture prophecies.

1. First, then, we find a system of prophecy to pervade the entire of the sacred volume. It may be said to be cast in the very mould of prophecy. Were there only one or two, or a few predictions, these might be accounted happy conjectures of shrewd and discerning men, who understood the signs of the times. At all events, suspicion might attach to them, and they would fail to produce unhesitating conviction. But when we find predictions delivered early in the history of mankind, comprehending all future generations, and stretching onward to the end of time, and these all confirmed by the development of actual history, we are constrained to acknowledge that they who delivered them "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Such predictions, then, are found in the Scriptures. We have an example in Noah, recorded in Gen. ix. 25—27, "He said, cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant." These three were the progenitors of the human family after the flood, and the history of the three great divisions of mankind descended from them, is presented in its grand outlines, from the period of the prophecy till the present time. Ham was the father of the Canaanites. His posterity are to be found still, generally, in the inhabitants of Africa. And how fearfully has the prediction been invariably fulfilled in their afflictions and servitude as "a servant of servants unto their brethren." Shem was the father of the Jews, and the word has been no less verified that he should be blessed in the many generations descended from him, their preservation to the present time, and the preparations now made for their enlarged prosperity. Japheth was the father of the Asiatic and European nations. So true has it proved that he should be enlarged. He has also long dwelt in the tents of Shem, having been adopted into the family of God, instead of Israel, when it was cast off for a time because of unbelief. And to him, also, Canaan has been a servant. Thus we have only to open our eyes and behold in the history of the nations of the earth, from the beginning hitherto, a proof of the truth of Scripture prophecy. As another example of a similar kind, we may notice Daniel's prophecy of the four great monarchies recorded in the 2d chapter at the 37th to the 40th verse. "Thou, O king, art this head of

gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron." During the last, it is added in ver. 44, "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." These words have proved to be a just delineation of all future history. They describe correctly the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, as well as the establishment of the gospel under the last, and its perpetuity in the earth. The Prophet was enabled to anticipate the revolutions through which the inhabitants of the world should pass. How could an erring man do so? There is only one explanation. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by him." How thankful should we be for such a demonstration of the truth? We have only to open our eyes and behold it. Surely men are without excuse if they remain unconvinced. On the broadest scale the evidences of the truth are spread out before them. They embrace all men and all periods of time. The whole world stands up to attest the truth of the sacred volume, and to proclaim trumpet-tongued that prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

2. While a system of prophecy pervades the whole of the sacred volume it contains many predictions of the minutest description. In this respect the word of God resembles His works—"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." The great system of nature proclaims its divine author. At the same time everything which it contains bears the closest scrutiny. The tiny flower is found to be as perfect as the most glorious orb of heaven. The microscope detects its wonders and its beauties, close at hand, while the telescope reveals the magnificence that is far off. So also is it in the word of God, and eminently in the department of prophecy. It comprehends all time and persons, yet fixes the attention on the minutest details of individual character. Take for example the predictions that respect the Saviour of mankind. From age to age they grow in clearness and minuteness. The circle becomes narrower and narrower until it closes around the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He cannot escape the discovery of all those who desire to know Him. At first He is announced generally as a partaker of human nature. "The seed of the woman shall

bruise the head of the serpent." He should be a man, a sufferer, and by suffering triumph. Next, His birth is limited to a special nation. God said to Abraham, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." They that looked for the deliverer must seek Him in Israel. More minute still, He is limited to a particular tribe of the favoured nation. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet till Shiloh come." The friend of man should spring out of the tribe of Judah. The very family is named. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." All the ancient interpreters of prophecy taught the people to look for the Messiah in the Son of David. More remarkable far, He should be born of a virgin. "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and call His name Immanuel." The time of His appearing was fixed. "Seventy weeks are determined upon my people, and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. After three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself." So also was the place of His birth determined. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that shall rule my people Israel, whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting." All this was more or less understood as it was developed to men. The expected Saviour became "the desire of all nations." In the fulness of time He came. All things were accomplished that were written concerning Him. The minutest circumstances are pointed out by His historians, who tell us, "all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." How then are we to account for the coincidence between the prediction and the fact? Surely on the ground that the word of God is confirmed by His providence. In no other way can the mystery be solved than by acknowledging the truth of the text, "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

3. It is farther to be observed, that the evidence of prophecy is progressive and cumulative. The older the world grows, the more distinct is its light. It is as the lighting of lamp after lamp in the dark apartment until it shines with splendour. In

this respect prophecy differs from miracles. They are perfected at once, and remain as a bright and unextinguished light in the firmament of truth, but prophecy grows brighter and brighter as it is more and more fully accomplished. In these latter days we have only to look on the condition of the earth and its inhabitants, and read the confirmation of prophecy in the facts that are patent to all eyes. A comprehensive summary is given in the work of Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, which may be appropriately introduced here. He says, "We see the descendants of Shem and Japheth ruling and enlarged in Asia and Europe, and perhaps in America, and the curse of servitude still attending the wretched descendants of Ham in Africa. We see the posterity of Ishmael 'multiplied exceedingly,' and become 'a great nation in the Arabs,' yet living like 'wild men,' and shifting from place to place in the wilderness, 'their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them,' and still dwelling an independent and free people in the presence of all their brethren, and in the presence of all their enemies. We see the family of Esau totally extinct, and that of Jacob subsisting at this day; 'the sceptre departed from Judah,' and the people living nowhere in authority, everywhere in subjection; the Jews still dwelling alone among the nations, while 'the remembrance of Amalek is utterly put out from under heaven.' We see the Jews severely punished for their infidelity and disobedience to their great prophet like unto Moses; plucked from off their own land, and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth; oppressed and spoiled evermore; 'a proverb and a bye-word among all nations.' We see Ephraim so 'broken as to be no more a people.' We see Nineveh so completely destroyed, that the place thereof is not known; Babylon made a desolation for ever; Tyre become like the top of a rock, a place for fishers to spread their nets; Egypt a base kingdom. We see a great apostacy in the Christian Church, 'forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.' We see the seven churches of Asia lying in the same forlorn and desolate condition that the angel had signified to John—'their candlestick removed out of its place.' For these things we have the attestation of past, and the experience of present times; and we cannot well be deceived, if we will only believe our own eyes and observation." We need only add to these remarks, that the evidence thus furnished not only endures, but increases continually. So it will be to the end,

until the angel shall lift his hand, and swear by Him that liveth for ever that time shall be no longer. Well might the Apostle say, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." The words of an ancient writer on prophecy are just and true. "Like wine, prophecy improves by age, and acquires with it not only ripeness and maturity, but strength and excellence. Time, which wears out and destroys almost everything else, only contributes to stamp the value, and to augment the influence and benefits, of prophecy. It is, therefore, from this circumstance alone, possessed of amazing powers. It is a motion continually accelerated; it is a weight perpetually descending, and, therefore, continually increasing its force and impulse as it descends. It is the cone, weak and narrow perhaps at top, but insensibly and incessantly enlarging itself, till it becomes a vast and solid mass, immense in weight and bulk, and irresistible in force and effect."

4. The evidence of prophecy is practical, and exercises a powerful influence on the heart and life. It is well said by John in the Apocalypse, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy." In its very nature the effect is salutary, not to speak of the blessing of God on the study of it.

It assures our hearts, and gives us confidence toward God. We feel that the truth is not a doubtful opinion, but a certified fact. God speaks to us.

It sustains our hope. We see that prophecy has been fulfilled, and we know that it shall be so to the end. We can sympathise with those of whom it is written, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

It makes us submissive to the divine will. Events may seem dark and portentous, but we know there is a voice that hath said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." We see how difficulties have been overcome in past times, and we know how it may be now and in the future. We can, therefore, wait upon God and say, "All things shall work together for good."

It enlarges the mind. The student of prophecy rises above the little devices of man, and looks abroad on the great plans and purposes of God. He is not disturbed by trifles. He feels that he can say of God, "Of whom, and through whom, and to whom

are all things, to whom be glory for ever." He is elevated to fellowship with the promises and providence of God.

It quickens exertion. God has united the end and the means. The means are, therefore, used with the assured confidence that the Lord will make them effectual to the end. The Word is obeyed in its integrity—"Be ye, therefore, stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Thus let us prove we truly receive the sentiment of the text—"Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Conclusion.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."—REV. i. 10.

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."—REV. v. 6.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—REV. xxii. 17.



IN the Book of the Revelation we have the consummation of the grace and glory of the Church, in time and eternity. This is the completion of the work of the Spirit. The testimony to the Spirit, therefore, in this book, is constant and full. To Him the writer ascribes all that he saw and taught, saying, as the introduction to all his revelations, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Here, too, as in all the Scriptures, the Lord and the Spirit are presented in closest communion, so that when John was "in the Spirit," filled with His influence, he tells us it was "on the Lord's day," that day being chosen by the Spirit in honour of Jesus, of whom it is the memorial. So again, when heaven was opened to the vision of the Prophet, and he tells what glorious discoveries were there made to him, he thus writes, "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Jesus, in the efficacy of His atonement, dispenses the Spirit in the plenitude of His grace upon the earth. And, not to cite other examples, this sacred book, closing the canon of inspiration, proclaims the Spirit's work in the precious words, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Holy Spirit Himself, and all whom He influences, unite to

invite sinners to Jesus. They tell them that in Him they shall find a fountain of "the water of life," even the Spirit Himself in all His fulness and grace. They cry, come to Jesus and drink freely of His Spirit.

These are fitting words with which to close the Scripture testimony to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit saith to sinners, come to Jesus.

Come to Jesus.

This is the burthen of the Spirit's message to the children of men, throughout all the Scriptures, under all dispensations, and at all times. The Spirit and the Saviour are uniformly revealed together, co-operating with the Father in executing the counsels of the Godhead toward the children of men. So have we seen and considered it in the history of the Old Testament Church—tracing it in the creation of the world—more especially in the creation of the soul of man—in the work of the Spirit in the conscience, striving with men—in the constitution of the early Church—the withdrawal of His gracious influence from the soul, where sin is indulged—His omnipresence wherever His communion is cultivated—His delightful work in the formation of the character of Christ foretold in prophecy—the restoration of Christ's people, the Jews—the government of the world by providence, for the honour of Christ and the interests of His kingdom—for the same ends, the perpetuity of the work of the Spirit—and its final triumph through the Spirit's power and grace. Thus, in the whole history of the ancient economy, the Spirit may be heard saying, "come to Jesus."

This testimony is still more clear in the personal history of the Saviour, when "in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." There the work of the Spirit is conspicuous in His conception by the Virgin Mary—His baptism—temptation—life and ministry—casting out devils—His zeal for the Spirit, declaring the sin against Him to be unpardonable—in those who waited for His appearing as exemplified in Simeon—teaching how the Spirit was to be obtained in answer to prayer—how He should be the great agent in bringing sinners into the membership of the Church—how abundantly He should be given under the light of His Gospel—how He should continue with

the Church for ever—how He would deal with the world also—how He would reveal the Saviour and His truth more and more fully—how it would be His grand office to glorify that Saviour—and how He would be present to the end of the world in the ordinances that Christ had appointed for His Church. Thus, through the whole personal history of the Son of God on the earth, the Spirit's voice is heard, crying—"Come to Jesus."

Yet, again, the same voice is heard in the history of the Church of Christ, subsequent to His resurrection and ascension. This is exemplified in the promise of the Spirit by Christ—in the effusion of the day of Pentecost—in the purification of the Church by the Spirit, as in the instance of Ananias and Sapphira—its good order and efficiency by the appointment of deacons—the support, and comfort, and triumph of the proto-martyr, Stephen—the ministry of Philip toward the Eunuch of Ethiopia—the conversion and ministry of Paul—the publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles—the character and ministry of Barnabas—the first missionaries of the Christian Church—the first council at Jerusalem—and the duty and responsibility of the Christian ministry. In all these the Spirit is seen conspicuously bearing witness to Christ. His voice is heard, proclaiming—"Come to Jesus."

Above all, this invitation is loud and earnest in the epistles to the Churches of the New Testament. There the Holy Ghost is revealed, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—the Spirit of adoption in Him—the Spirit of prayer through Him—the Spirit of instruction revealing Christ—dwelling in those who believe in Jesus—endowing them with gifts necessary to their appointed work—transforming them after the image of Christ—causing them to bring forth fruit abundantly to Him—sealing them to be His—requiring them to maintain the unity of His Church—warning them not to grieve Him by disobeying and dishonouring their Lord—furnishing them with the Holy Scriptures, in which they were to search and find Christ—and confirming their testimony to Him by prophecies to be fulfilled till the end of time, so accumulating the evidence of their truth. Thus loud and long continued is the voice of the Spirit to sinners—reiterating the cry that has been heard from the beginning—"Come to Jesus."

Sinners! come to Jesus. The Spirit invites, entreats, commands, and enables you to come. This is His special office, and

He waits on you to execute it. Be persuaded to listen to His call, and at His bidding, and by His grace, come to Jesus.

Come to Him for pardon. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for purity. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for wisdom. "In Him are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for strength. He says—"my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for consolation. He says—"come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for usefulness. His words to His people are, "ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt of the earth." Come, and He will enable you to let your light shine before men, that you may glorify your Father who is heaven. "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him when you die. The promise is sure, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The triumph may be your's—"thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ." "The Spirit saith, Come."

Come to Him for the Holy Spirit, that He may abide in you constantly and for ever. His own assurance is—"if any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This promise is fulfilled by the gift and indwelling of His Spirit. And this alone can meet the necessities of life. "Whosoever drinketh of this water (such as the world supplies) shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." "The Spirit saith, Come."—
COME TO JESUS. Amen.

APPENDIX.

SUBJECTS AND TEXTS

OF A SERIES OF DISCOURSES ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES TO
THE HOLY SPIRIT, DELIVERED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FISHER-
WICK-PLACE—AND NOW CONDENSED IN THE PRESENT VOLUME.

THE work of the Spirit in the creation of the world. Genesis i. 2,
'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.'

The work of the Spirit in the creation of man. Genesis ii. 7, 'The
Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his
nostrils the breath of life.'

The striving of the Spirit with the conscience of men. Genesis vi.
3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.'

The indwelling of the Spirit, illustrated in the history of Joseph.
Genesis xli. 38, 'A man in whom the Spirit of God is.'

The work of the Spirit in the intellectual endowments of men. Exo-
dus xxxi. 3, 'I have filled him (Bezaleel) with the Spirit of God in
wisdom.'

It is the work of the Spirit to qualify Magistrates for their office.
Numbers xi. 17, 'I will take of the Spirit that is upon thee (Moses),
and will put it upon them (the 70 Elders).'

The work of the Spirit in raising up deliverers of the Church and
nation. Judges iii. 10, 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and
he judged Israel.'

The Spirit transferred from one person to another. 2 Kings ii. 15,
'The Spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.'

The work of the Spirit in the outward model of the Church. 1
Chronicles xxviii. 11, 12, 'David gave to Solomon the pattern of all
that he had by the Spirit.'

The goodness of the Spirit. Nehemiah ix. 20, 'Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them.'

The work of the Spirit in bestowing and continuing reason to man. Job xxxii. 8, 'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'

The holiness of the Spirit. Psalm li. 11, 'Thy holy Spirit.'

The withdrawal of the Spirit. Psalm li. 11, 'Take not thy holy Spirit from me.'

The freeness of the Spirit. Psalm li. 11, 'Thy free Spirit.'

The work of the Spirit in renewing the face of Nature. Psalm civ. 30, 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit—they are created.'

The omniscience and omnipresence of the Spirit. Psalm cxxxix. 7, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit.'

The work of the Spirit in the reformation of society. Proverbs i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit unto you.'

The wind an emblem of the Spirit. Song iv. 16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'

The work of the Spirit on the human nature of Christ. Isaiah xi. 2, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.'

The work of the Spirit in forming the character of Christ. Isaiah xi. 2, 'The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,' &c.

The Holy Spirit the author of revivals in the Church. Isaiah xxxii. 15, 'Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.'

The work of the Spirit in times of extremity. Isaiah lix. 19, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.'

The continuance of the Spirit with the seed of the righteous. Isaiah lix. 21, 'My Spirit shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed—for ever.'

Christ appointed by the Spirit to His public ministry. Isaiah lxi. 1, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me.'

Oil an emblem of the Spirit. Isaiah lxi. 3, 'The oil of joy.'

The Holy Spirit a Spirit of judgment. Isaiah lxiii. 10, 'They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.'

The work of the Spirit in providence. Ezekiel i. 20, 'Whither the Spirit was to go they went.'

Water an emblem of the Spirit. Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 27, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.'

The work of the Spirit in giving spiritual life. Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-10, 'Son of man, can these bones live?'

The source from which the Holy Spirit is conveyed to men. Ezekiel xlvii. 1-12, 'Waters issued out from under the threshold of the house.'

The Gospel dispensation opened with a remarkable effusion of the Spirit. Joel ii. 28, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.'

The dependence of human effort on the power of the Spirit. Zechariah iv. 6, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.'

The grace of the Spirit. Zechariah xii. 10, 'I will pour upon the house of David the Spirit of Grace.'

The grace of prayer the gift of the Spirit. Zechariah xii. 10, 'The Spirit of supplications.'

The conception of Christ the work of the Holy Spirit. Matthew i. 20, 'That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.'

Fire an emblem of the Spirit. Matthew iii. 11, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.'

The dove an emblem of the Spirit. Matthew iii. 16, 'He saw the Spirit descending like a dove.'

The Spirit leading Christ to His first grand conflict with Satan. Matthew iv. 1, 'Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.'

The sin against the Holy Ghost. Matthew xii. 31, 'The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.'

The celebration of baptism in the name of the Spirit. Matthew xxviii. 19, 'Baptizing them in the name of the Holy Ghost.'

The baptism of the Spirit. Mark i. 8, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.'

The presence and power of the Spirit in times of trial. Mark xiii. 11, 'It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost that speaketh in you.'

Infant children the subjects of the Spirit's operation. Luke i. 15, 'He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.'

The life of good men under the guidance of the Spirit. Luke ii. 27, 'Simon,—came by the Spirit into the temple.'

The Spirit obtained in answer to prayer. Luke xl. 13, 'Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.'

Regeneration the work of the Spirit. John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

The residue of the Spirit with Christ. John iii. 34, 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.'

The blessedness of having the Spirit. John vii. 38, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'

The connexion between faith and the gift of the Spirit. John vii. 39, 'The Spirit,—which they that believe on Him should receive.'

The abundant measure of the Spirit under the Gospel. John vii. 39, 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'

The Holy Ghost imparted through the intercession of Christ. John xiv. 16, 17, 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.'

The Holy Spirit, the teacher of truth to the Church. John xiv. 26, 'He shall teach you all things.'

The Spirit of truth. John xv. 26, 'The Spirit of truth,—He shall testify of me.'

The gift of the Spirit purchased by the death of Christ. John xvi. 7, 'If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you.'

Conviction of sin by the Spirit. John xvi. 9, 'Of sin, because they believe not on me.'

Conviction of righteousness by the Spirit. John xvi. 10, 'Of righteousness, because I go to my Father.'

Conviction of judgment by the Spirit, John xvi. 11, 'Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.'

The truth gradually revealed by the Spirit, John xvi. 13, 'When the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth.'

Christ glorified by the Spirit. John xvi. 14, 'He shall glorify me.'

The day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 3, 'There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire.'

Apostolic preaching. Acts iv. 31, 'They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.'

The hatred of the Spirit to lying. Acts v. 3, 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost.'

The Holy Ghost a witness unto Christ. Acts v. 32, 'We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost.'

The Spirit owned in the appointment of Deacons, Acts vi. 3, 'Seek ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost.'

The connexion between obedience and the gift of the Spirit, Acts v. 32, 'The Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.'

The sin of resisting the Spirit. Acts vii. 51, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.'

The Holy Ghost the sustaining Spirit of the martyr. Acts vii. 55, 'Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven.'

The difference between the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Acts viii. 17, 'Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.'

Instruments raised up, employed, and withdrawn by the Spirit. Acts viii. 29, 'The Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot.'

The work of the Spirit in the conversion of Paul. Acts ix. 17.

The first preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Acts x. 19, 'The Spirit said unto him (Peter), behold three men seek thee.'

The work of the Spirit in Barnabas. Acts xi. 24.

The ministers of the word called by the Spirit. Acts xiii. 2, 'The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul.'

The work of the Spirit in the Council at Jerusalem. Acts v. 28.

The restraining work of the Spirit. Acts xvi. 6, 'They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.'

The work of the Spirit in the appointment of the Ministers of the Church.' Acts xx. 28.

The love of God revealed to the soul by the Spirit. Romans v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.'

The conformity of the Christian to the Holy Spirit. Romans viii. 1, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

The freedom conferred by the Spirit. Romans viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.'

The presence of the Spirit manifested by the habit of the life. Romans viii. 5, 'They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.'

The indwelling of the Spirit essential to the Christian life. Romans viii. 9, 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.'

The Holy Ghost the Spirit of life in man. Romans viii. 10, 'The Spirit is life.'

The mortification of the flesh the work of the Spirit. Romans viii. 13, 'Ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.'

The Holy Ghost the Spirit of adoption. Romans viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.'

The Spirit witnesseth with our Spirit. Romans viii. 16, 'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.'

The grace of the Spirit the earnest of future glory. Romans viii. 23, 'The first fruits of the Spirit.'

The help of the Spirit in prayer. Romans viii. 26, 'The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.'

The Spirit of hope. Romans xv. 13, 'Abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.'

The love of the Spirit in redemption.* Romans xv. 30, 'I beseech you,—for the love of the Spirit.'

The dependence of the preached word on the blessing of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians ii. 4, 'In demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'

Believers the temples of the Holy Ghost. 1 Corinthians iii. 16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God.'

The blessings of redemption united in the work of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians vi. 11, 'Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

The Spirit of God not the author of error. 1 Corinthians xii. 3, 'No man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed.'

All the gifts of the believer are from the hand of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians xii. 4, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.'

Christians united to each other by the Spirit. 1 Corinthians xii. 13, 'By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.'

The Gospel of Christ the dispensation of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians iii. 8, 'The ministration of the Spirit.'

The liberty of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians iii. 17, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

The work of the Spirit in conforming the believer to Christ. 2 Corinthians iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord.'

The abiding presence of the Spirit with believers. 2 Corinthians xiii. 14, 'The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you.'

The spiritual warfare. Galatians v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is joy.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is peace.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is goodness.'

Galatians v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is faith.'

Galatians v. 23, 'The fruit of the Spirit is meekness.'

Galatians v. 23, 'The fruit of the Spirit is temperance.'

The connexion between the indwelling of the Spirit and purity of life. Galatians v. 25, 'If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit.'

The consequence of sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit. Galatians vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

The sealing of the Spirit. Ephesians i. 13, 'Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.'

Access to the Father, by the Spirit, through the Son. Ephesians ii. 18, "Through whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'

The Church the habitation of the Spirit. Ephesians ii. 22, 'Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.'

The inward strength imparted by the Spirit. Ephesians iii. 16, 'Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.'

The unity of the Spirit. Ephesians iv. 3, 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

The sin and danger of grieving the Spirit. Ephesians iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.'

The necessity of purity to the enjoyment of the Spirit. Ephesians v. 18, 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.'

The sin and danger of quenching the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians v. 19, 'Quench not the Spirit.'

The connexion between faith and the sanctification of the Spirit. 2 Thessalonians ii. 13, 'Through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.'

The Holy Spirit the author of the Scriptures. 2 Timothy iii. 16, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.'

Salvation the work of the Holy Spirit, Titus iii. 5-7, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration,' &c.

The Holy Ghost the author of miracles. Hebrews ii. 4, 'God also bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.'

The Holy Ghost the author of prophecy. 2 Peter i. 21, 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

The mark of the Spirit. 1 John iv. 2, 'Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.'

The promise of the Holy Spirit to the Christian Sabbath. Revelation i. 10, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

The Spirit inviting the sinner to Jesus. Revelation xxii. 17, 'The Spirit saith, come.'

THE END.

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